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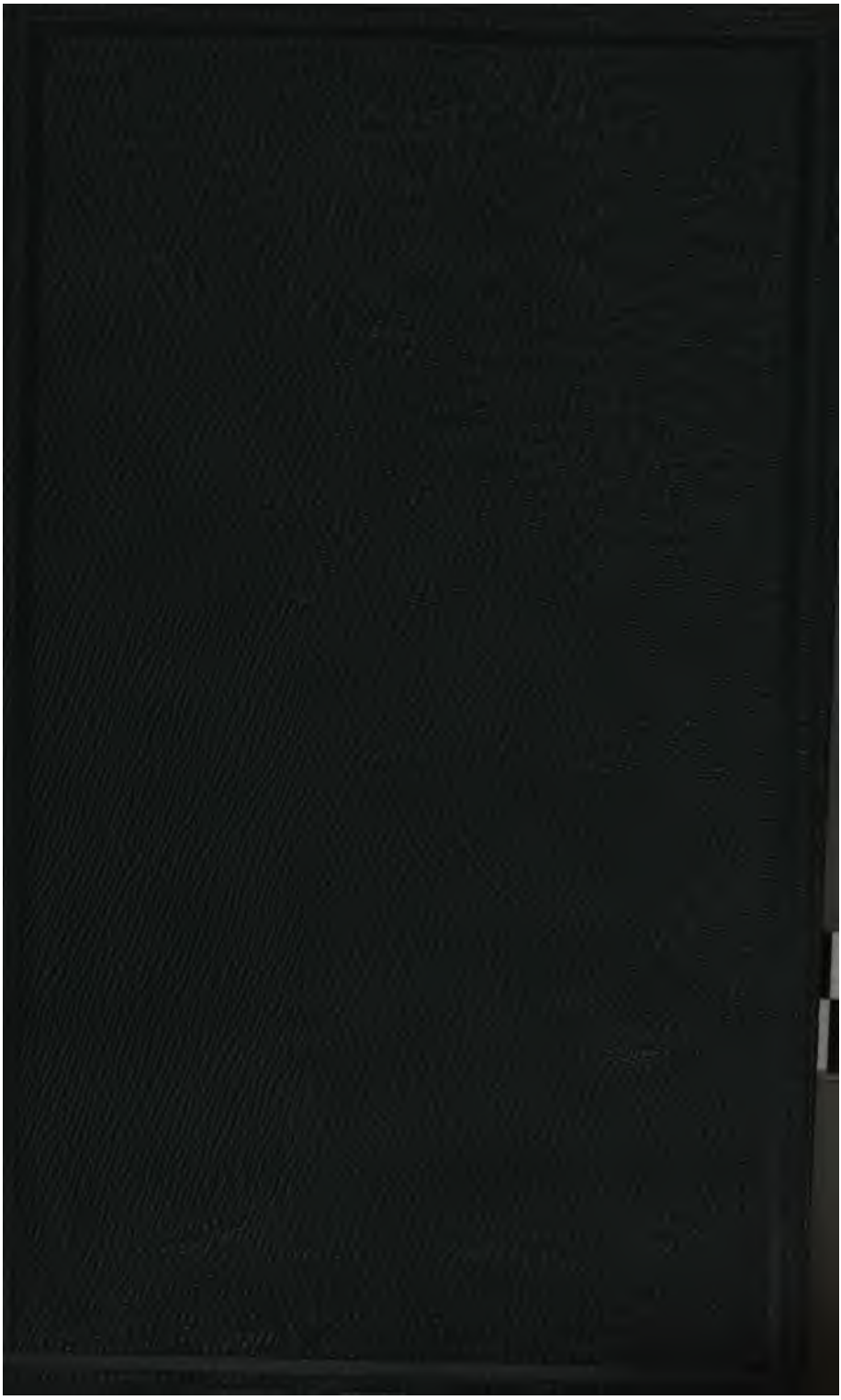

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THE

MORALS OF MAY FAIR.

A NOVEL.

"Der Wahn ist kurz, die Reu' ist lang."
SCHILLER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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THE MORALS OF MAY FAIR.

CHAPTER I.

When Philip awoke on the following morning after his arrival at Kersaint, the sun was shining brightly into his room.

For a few seconds, he could not remember where he was, or disengage his adventure of the previous evening from the dreams of the night—dreams in which, it must be confessed, Marguerite had still held a prominent place. Gradually, however, his full consciousness returned; he recalled the quaint furniture of his sleeping-room—and the murmuring of the sea without—and he rose, and began to dress.

His toilet was just finished, when he heard a merry young voice immediately under his window, in conversation with another, whose high, loud tones he soon recognized as those of Manon; and, drawing back the old-fashioned bolt of the casement, Philip opened it, and looked out.

It was a sweet May morning; every trace of the storm of yesterday had disappeared, and only left the grass and trees more brightly green than before. The air came in fresh from the sea, which Philip now saw at the bottom of the garden, blue and sparkling, but still bearing small crested waves upon its bosom. The sea-gulls were floating happily among them, or skimming towards their nests among the rocks; the pigeons wheeled in circuits round the manoir, their varied colours gleaming as they flew in the red morning sun; and a perfect chorus of blackbirds and thrushes arose from the orchard, which, thick in pink blossom, lay on the left side of the garden.

The white sails of some fishing-boats, making their way up the Channel before the western

breeze, and the tolling of a very distant church bell, were all that belonged to humanity in the scene, until Philip, leaning somewhat through the open window, looked down; and he then saw his little friend of the previous evening and Manon—both so intent, however, in watching the damages done by the rain to some of the garden flowers, that for the last few seconds they had been quite silent.

Philip gazed at Marguerite intently; and, if he had thought her lovely the evening before, his admiration now was enhanced tenfold. She had been for an hour or more in the open air, and her cheeks were in a perfect glow of health and freshness; her long hair—rather disordered, for she never wore a bonnet in the garden—hung about her face, and caught a thousand wavy reflections in the sunshine, her full, graceful figure showed to perfection in a close-fitting holland dress; and, as she held it high out of the damp gravel—an unnecessary precaution, for it was already short enough—Philip remarked, that, not even the thick, country-made shoes could conceal the symmetry of her little feet. In one hand she held a

bouquet of such flowers as the rain had spared; and Manon's basket of parsley and salads showed that they had already visited the kitchen garden.

"Do you think he will be very late, Manon?" cried Marguerite, suddenly.

"The English monsieur?"

"Yes, of course."

"I hope so, poor gentleman! after such a wetting as he had yesterday, there is nothing like a long night's rest. I remember once, when I was a girl—it will be just six and thirty years next All-hallows—my father was returning from Quimper, one stormy night, and ——"

"Yes, good Manon," interrupted Marguerite, "I remember all about it; and he was *not* drowned, you know. How disappointing it is," she resumed, to herself, "to think that he will not be down for hours, perhaps! and I was up and dressed before five, in case he should wake early and wish to see the garden. I hope the curtains of his room are not drawn, and then the sun may shine in and wake him. Let us see!" and, running back a step or two, Marguerite looked up.

There—leaning forward, so that he must have overheard every word she said—was the stranger. He bowed to her, and smiled, as their eyes met; but Marguerite blushed deeply, and thinking she had done something wrong in talking so loud under his window, she called hastily to Manon, and, without returning his salutation, ran away.

Philip followed her with his eyes until she disappeared on the side of the orchard, and then, after nodding kindly to Manon, who all the time had been giving him a series of bows and smiles, he prepared to descend. This was, however, not quite so easy a matter as one might think at first; the passages were so intricate, the turnings so endless, that Philip, at length, almost despaired of finding the great staircase, and he was just making a third effort to do so, when he came upon a small, dark flight of winding stairs, communicating with the lower part of the building, and down these he proceeded at once.

At the bottom he met Manon, who was hastening to the kitchen with her basket of vegetables, and her dignity was greatly wounded

on discovering that monsieur had descended by the servants' stairs. She half proposed to accompany him again to his apartment, and conduct him down by the legitimate mode of descent; but Philip interrupted her with a smile, and said he was glad to make acquaintance with all parts of the château, "which," he added, "from the difficulty I had in finding my way, must be a very large building."

"Ah, monsieur!" returned Manon, "it is a noble and beautiful place, and you would think so, could you have seen it in former days; I mean when we first came to live here. Now it may seem a little lonely, with only my master and mademoiselle, and not a servant save me. But it is *his* wish, you see," she added, confidentially; "he cannot bear a number of attendants about him, and one must not thwart the fancies of an invalid."

It was Manon's grand object in life to conceal her master's poverty, and she took this early opportunity of accounting to the stranger for the scantiness of the household.

"I fear Mr. St. John is far from well," remarked Philip.

Manon looked very grave. "He is greatly changed in the last year," she replied; "and unless he improves much during this summer, he will never get through another such winter as the last."

"The climate must be severe here," said Philip.

"Well, it is not very cold—not nearly so cold as in Paris, for example, where I lived with my dear mistress for two years after her marriage—but it is damp and foggy, and so much exposed to storms, that it is almost impossible for an invalid to get out from November till May. It does not hurt those in health—my young lady is as blooming as a rose in the dreariest weather, and of course nothing can hurt me, a Breton peasant—but for my master, Kersaint is no good place now."

"His daughter seems unaware that Mr. St. John is in any danger," observed Philip.

"And may the Bon Dieu forbid that she should be otherwise," returned Manon hastily. "She will have sorrow enough when he is gone, and she is thrown upon strangers, without having trouble forced upon her now. I like to

see her smiling and joyous, my poor child; and I am glad, monsieur, very glad, that you have arrived to bear her and my master a little company. There are none in this neighbourhood fit for them to associate with."

Philip quite won Manon's heart by his evident interest in her master's health; and after a few minutes, she volunteered to shew him round the garden. "Mademoiselle is there," she said, "and as my master will not be down quite yet, perhaps monsieur would like to walk for half an hour on the terrace before breakfast."

But Philip said he should find his way perfectly this time, and, leaving Manon to proceed to her kitchen duties, he went out through a low archway into the garden.

The good order of the flower borders struck him immediately as contrasted with the desolate-looking house, broken flights of steps, and the disordered state of the walls and fences. He judged rightly that the little fairy of his night's dreams presided over this portion of the garden, and he looked on all sides in search of her; but she was nowhere visible. Then

he walked to the further end, and reached the terrace, from whence he could see over the adjoining orchard, and meadows—but still no Marguerite.

"Can she really be offended," thought Philip, "because I overheard her talking of me? No, she is too child-like for that."

He took a few turns—every moment expecting to see her—but when a quarter of an hour passed on, and she did not appear, he grew impatient; and, spying a flight of moss-grown steps, which led down to the sands, he resolved to go and walk by the sea-side for an hour, and forget this capricious little lady. He sprang down, three steps at once, and suddenly discovered Marguerite, seated at the bend of the wall, on a projecting slab of granite, and making up bouquets from a heap of spring flowers in her lap.

Philip stopped short.

"Good morning, mademoiselle!"

"Good morning!" She turned her face quite away from him, with a feeling of shyness she had never before experienced in her life. Had she really said something so wrong, when he overheard her?

"I thought you were lost, and have been searching for you all over the garden."

No answer. She could not confess that she had run away from him.

"Ah!" said Philip, next; "I see you are very angry with me for overhearing you; but it was not my fault. I opened my window, to listen to the birds, and I could not help it, if your voice was amongst them—indeed, at first I did not distinguish it from their's!"

Marguerite looked up at him quickly, and the expression of his face showed her her mistake: he thought *her* offended. Young as she was, this idea gave her pleasure, and, to keep it up, she tried hard not to smile; then—shaking her curls so as to conceal her face—bent down again, and went on with her bouquets.

Philip seated himself on the step, at her feet, and began watching her very gravely; but Marguerite could not get on half so well with her work now, as she had done before he came, and once or twice the flowers slipped from her hands as she was fastening them.

"Well," said Philip, at last, "I am sure I could make up bouquets better than you do!

You place all the wrong colours together;" and he took the scissors from her hand, and some of the best flowers from her collection, and laying them on the steps beside him, began very leisurely to arrange them.

He had naturally a good eye for harmony of colour, but he now, purposely, assorted them as ill as he could. Yellow primroses he placed by pink hawthorn, violets with the bright blue hepatica, so that the colour of each was destroyed by its neighbour; then he tied them in prim, regular bunches, each stalk exactly the same length, and with no mixture of green leaves, but all the time preserving a countenance of the most perfect seriousness, as though he were performing the task to the best of his ability. Marguerite looked at him from under her long eye-lashes, and tried hard to repress a sly smile at the hideous little bouquets, and Philip's air of satisfaction with himself. But it would not do, and at length she was forced to cover the lower part of her face with one hand.

Philip looked up, and saw her eyes laughing.

"I flatter myself mine are arranged with taste," he remarked.

Here Marguerite could hold out no longer; —clasping her hands together in her lap, she went into such a long fit of childish laughter, as did Philip good to hear. It was a minute or two before she could speak; at length she cried—

"So that is English taste! and those are English nosegays! Oh! I am glad I have seen them." And again she broke into a clear merry laugh.

Philip looked astonished.

"Is it possible you do not admire them?" he said. "Well, I thought they were perfect —so neat and regular; but, of course, you are right. Suppose you give me a lesson: I want to know how everything is done in Brittany."

He cut all the strings, and, mixing the flowers together, returned them into Marguerite's lap. This little scene had made her feel perfectly at her ease with him again; and, believing that he was quite in earnest in his wish to learn, she gathered up the flowers in her frock, and, seating herself on the step close beside him, said she would teach him.

The lesson began, and lasted long. Philip was very slow to learn, and Marguerite had to give him a thousand practical instructions, which he never could master until the second or third trial. She was quite interested and serious, and her impatience was great when her long bright curls would fall upon their work and interrupt them.

"Am I very slow?" asked Philip, as Marguerite was trying to bend his fingers to their task.

"Well," she answered, "not slow—but I think you a little——"

"What? I like to hear my faults."

"A little perverse. Your hands do not look awkward, and yet you *will* not learn to hold the flowers more lightly. Now, let me show you once more, or you will make it look like another English nosegay;" and she knelt on the step beneath him, in her earnestness guiding his hands with her own, and every minute looking up and smiling in his face.

"You have made that last one beautifully!" she exclaimed; "better than mine! I believe, after all, you only pretended to take a

lesson, and have been arranging flowers all your life."

"Well, it is so very pleasant to learn!" answered Philip.

"Is it? Ah! not always. I do not like my irregular verbs with Monsieur le Curé, par exemple; but I might like to learn from some people."

"From me, perhaps?"

"Y—es, perhaps."

"A very hesitating answer. I am sorry I look so bad tempered."

"Oh! it is not that, I assure you, for I told Manon I never liked any face so much as yours before. But, then, you are too young for a master. Just when you meant to be very severe, I should look in your face and —laugh."

"Then, I must not offer to give you lessons in English pronunciation, as I had intended."

"Yes, yes, you may; only, you must promise not to be too severe, and not to be offended, if I sometimes forget to be grave!"

At last all the flowers were gone, and they had finished four bouquets.

"One for my father, one for you, and one a-piece for Manon and me."

"And who is this for?" he asked, taking up the one in which Marguerite had collected all the most delicate and sweet-scented flowers, even to a rose-bud, which she had discovered under shelter of the terrace.

"That is for father, of course; but you shall have the next best."

"And which for yourself, mademoiselle?"

"Well, Manon must choose, and whichever is left is for me. Do not call me mademoiselle, please! Father says, as long as I am a child, every one should call me Marguerite."

"And are you only a child still?"

"Oh!" she answered, smiling, "I am, indeed. I often wish that I were older and wiser, for his sake; but in two months I shall be sixteen, and that, you know, is getting on towards being grown-up. Shall we go down to the beach before breakfast?"

She ran lightly down the steps, and they were soon close to the sea. It was now low water, and there was a wide expanse of shining dry sand, stretching far away before them.

Philip felt a new sense of youth and life as they walked, and Marguerite, holding her flowers, her up-turned face more blooming than they, and her hair dancing about over her shoulders, was soon talking to him with all the unrestraint of the previous evening.

She possessed a rare charm—one with which he had never before chanced to be thrown in contact—that of perfect innocence! And Philip, who, a few weeks back, had pronounced his last youthful illusion over, now became conscious—while he gazed into this young face, and read, through all her child-like manner, the deep, tender nature of Marguerite—that the true illusion of life—the first love which bathes the whole earth in golden glory—had for him never yet dawned.

CHAPTER II.

PHILIP'S childhood, after his parent's death, having been passed exclusively among his own sex, he had never, as a boy, known the sweet love of mother or sister; and, as he grew up, the women with whom he had been most intimate were Clara St. Leger and her mother—the one a mere woman of the world, the other cold and unnatural from her education. In society he had certainly met hundreds of young ladies—many of them lovely, all, of course, innocent and interesting, and ready to become excellent wives—but these were uniformly 'young ladies,' well trained, well paced, well looked after, and they had been trotted out in

rotation before Philip without one of them effecting more than the awakening of a passing fancy in his mind. The miserable failure of his married life had been his next trial of what ought to be love, and the society of actresses the crowning stroke of his experience.

No wonder the companionship of Marguerite seemed something far apart from all he had known before! No wonder, as they walked along, Philip forgot the wide gulf which, in reality, separated them! He, already world-stained and weary, and bound by a tie which must for ever shut him out of the pale of all pure love; Marguerite, with the holiness of childhood yet upon her forehead, and no knowledge of life, except that the sky was blue above her, and that God was good. He only felt that a sinless nature was, at length, before him, and that the true love he had written about, but never found, would some day awaken in Marguerite's heart—for whom?

"You look thoughtful, monsieur; that is your grave look now!"

"I believe my looks are always grave."

"No; not when we were tying up the flowers. Then you looked very happy."

"Are you often grave, Marguerite?"

"Not very often; but sometimes I am more than grave. When my father looks so pale, and begins to speak of my mother, and that it would be far better for him to be with her, I come out, alone, on the shore, and feel something *here*"—she laid her hand on her heart—"which I cannot describe—a thick, dull weight it is—and then I almost wish to die. I seldom feel this great pain, however, except when it is connected with father; but often of an evening, when the sun is down, and the stars are coming out one by one over the sea, and I sit by the window alone, or, in summer, down on the terrace, I feel, not unhappy—that is not the word—but I miss something, you understand, and then I am very grave; and the more beautiful the sea and the stars look, the more I feel lonely. I never felt this when I was younger, only the last year or two; and yet I have my father and Manon with me just the same now as formerly. Did you ever feel the same?"

"Yes, years ago, when I was your age," replied Philip.

"But you are not very old now."

"Old enough to gaze at the stars without becoming sad."

She looked at him quickly, to be quite sure he was not laughing at her; but there was no smile on his face.

"Have you any mother?" she asked, softly, and touching his hand with her own.

"She died when I was a young child."

"Or sister, or ——"

"I have no one," answered Philip, shortly.

"Ah!"—and the little hand closed upon his—"and I have no one, but my father! But, when you have *one* person to love, you do not wish for any other. It must be dreadful to be quite alone." After a pause she resumed, timidly, "Did you say you would remain half the summer in Bretagne?"

"Yes," replied Philip; "what I had already seen of it made me wish to stay; but, since yesterday, I have quite determined upon doing so."

It was one of those accustomed compliments which pass current, and mean nothing in society; but Marguerite's heart actually throbbed.

"That is since he has known me," she thought. Then she added, aloud, "I shall think I have a brother while you are here."

They had now wandered to some distance on the sands, and a clear, wide stream of fresh water, running towards the sea, formed a barrier to their further progress. They were just hesitating about fording it, and Marguèrite was saying she had done so dozens of times before, when one of them happening to turn, descried Manon, barely visible on the terrace, in the far distance, waving her arms and throwing up her apron in a wild state of excitement. The breakfast was ready, and poor Manon for some minutes—with feelings none but a cook can appreciate—had been watching the guest walk further and further away from his meal, and feeling herself powerless to recal him. When they halted, her hopes of being seen revived; and she soon thankfully perceived that they had understood her signals, so she ran in to keep the coffee hot, and to tell her master that they were coming.

Mr. St. John was seated in his library—the room in which they were to breakfast—

wrapped in a loose dressing-gown, and with a book already in his hand. This room was the warmest in the house, being smaller than most of the others, and with a southern aspect, and here the invalid generally spent the entire winter. The walls and ceiling were all of oak panelling. Scarcely any of the former, however, were to be seen, for well-stored bookcases stood on each side of the room. An English carpet covered the floor; and the worked cushions on the window seats, the foot-stool and warm easy chair, and a dozen little home-constructed luxuries, bore witness to the female care which presided over the occupant's comfort. The window opened upon the garden, and Mr. St. John soon saw Philip and his daughter descending from the terrace, both looking animated, and Marguerite laughing merrily at something her companion was saying; and as the invalid watched them, evidently so well pleased with each other, a thought arose which caused a faint smile to wander aeross his face. Perhaps, had this vague hope been rendered into words, it might have been—'After all, it is possible that I may

leave my child with a protector!' Their entrance, however, dispelled any such dreams for the present, and, after a cordial greeting, the trio were soon seated at their cheerful breakfast.

Philip did great justice to Manon's provisions, all of which were excellent. Clear strong coffee—such as he had vainly wished for with his own grand English cook—fresh eggs, broiled fish, —caught that morning in the bay—butter of Manon's own making, constituted the staple of the meal. Mr. St. John smiled at the hearty good-will with which his guest attacked his breakfast; and then turning to Marguerite, asked her why she eat so little.

She could not reply that she was too happy to be hungry, which was the truth, but said Manon had cut her such a huge tartine early in the morning, that she had no further appetite.

"Perhaps, we walked too far," added Philip.

"Oh!" said Mr. St. John, "'too far' are words unknown to Marguerite. She spends the whole of her idle life out of doors, in summer, and, I verily believe, never experiences

such a thing as fatigue. Where did you get all these flowers, little one?"

"I had such a hunt for them, father! The rain has beaten down the best, and I could only gather those which grew in very sheltered places. Do you see that rose-bud in yours? —the first this summer, petit papa."

"But you should have presented that to your visitor."

"No, no! The first rose is always for you. But I have given Mr. Earnscliffe a lesson in bouquet-making, this morning. It was so pleasant, sitting on the terrace steps, in the warm sun; and do you know, father, just when we finished, I found out that he had only been pretending, and could make them as well as I all the time! N'est ce pas qu'il est méchant ce monsieur?"

The conversation went on merrily, and Mr. St. John appeared in such good spirits, and so animated, that Philip thought he must have been mistaken in considering him dangerously ill. They talked much about the inhabitants and antiquities of Brittany, and Mr. St. John's invitation of the previous evening, to remain at

least for some days at Kersaint, was repeated—seconded by an eloquent lookfrom Marguerite—and cordially accepted by Philip. He felt that he was with old friends already.

After breakfast, when Marguerite had retired to confer with Manon on domestic matters, Earnscliffe began to notice his host's extensive collection of books, and led him on gradually to speak of them, and of himself.

"My books have been my sole friends, except my child, for sixteen years," said Mr. St. John; "and I have grown so accustomed to look upon them in the light of human beings, that I scarcely now am conscious of the absence of other companionship. At your time of life, such an existence as mine must appear a kind of living death. It is only after a man has outlived ambition, and lost the ties of domestic life, that he can find in himself a happier resting-place than in the world! Are you anything of a bookworm, like myself? If so, in this case, nearest the fire-place, there are some rare works likely to interest you; and should we have wet weather during your stay at Kersaint, you might find a day's employment among them."

Philip thought that Marguerite's face would be better reading than the somewhat ponderous volumes alluded to by her father. However, he entered with animation into the subject which formed the one interest of the invalid's life, and they were soon deep in literary talk. Mr. St. John had been so long absent from England, that he was anxious to hear about all the new writers of the day; and had also numbers of old friends to enquire for, most of whom were now either dead or retired from their active life.

"Then, who is the most popular writer of fiction now?" he asked, at length.

Philip knew that his own was one of the rising names in the field of romantic literature; he replied, however, by naming several others of the more distinguished authors.

"And of poetry?"

"Well, that is easily replied to — none. Since the galaxy of poetic genius, which arose in Germany and England early in this century, the race seems to have died out. Writers of poems we have many, and one whose thoughts, when not utterly obscured by affec-

tation, are so sweet — his word-painting so true—that one is half tempted, at times, to call him a poet. Still, not even his will be a lasting fame. We have no colossal genius now that, like Shakspeare, or Dante, or Cervantes, can create at once and for ever an absorbing interest—take fast hold upon the hearts of all classes of readers—and become a familiar household god beyond the power of fashion to cast down. Wordsworth and Moore, certainly, still live; but they belong to the past. England has now no great poet."

"And France, in my opinion, has never had one. Fond as I am of some portions of French literature, their artificial, monotonous verse—with the single exception of Beranger's songs, perhaps—sends me to sleep. But every day I make my little daughter read aloud to me some of our own Milton or Shakspeare; if she is too young fully to understand them, she can yet read well; and would you believe, sir, that hour is pleasanter to me than the remaining ten of my own studies—so fond are we all of anything which seems to connect genius with ourselves! and the child's voice

makes me actually feel those glorious thoughts my own more than all the annotations upon them that ever were written."

Philip said he could well believe this, and after a minute or two added, simply—"Your daughter is very lovely, sir."

"Is she so?" returned Mr. St. John, almost starting. "Well, I never thought about it before. Of course, she is fair in my eyes; but I have not yet considered that she would be called beautiful by others. It is possible," he added, dreamily, "she is like her mother!"

His face relapsed into its habitual melancholy at this recollection—it always did so at any allusion to his wife—and Philip began to think that her death must have been the origin of Mr. St. John's disinclination for the world.

"Shall you venture out to-day?" he inquired, hoping to change his thoughts.

"No, I thank you. The ground is still damp, and the wind too uncertain for me. But you must not remain in the house this fine spring day, on my account. See, Marguerite is already in the garden, doubtless, expecting you to join her for a walk!"

Philip saw that the invalid preferred being alone, and he was soon by Marguerite's side, in the garden, helping her to tie up some flowers that had suffered from the rain. When they had finished, she proposed a long walk; and, crossing the orchard, they started through heaths and forests to some ruins about a league distant.

Marguerite did not care much for wet paths, and, in taking Earnscliffe a short way of her own discovery, sprang lightly over streams and bushes in a manner rather surprising to eyes only accustomed to London young ladies. A little straw bonnet, which the wind blew incessantly from her head, and a scarf round her throat, were the only additions to her morning dress; and yet, thus attired, and running wild in the wildest parts of Brittany, no stranger could have met Marguerite without being struck by her easy high-born carriage, and the natural grace which made everything she wore becoming. She was in high spirits at having to conduct Philip, and pointed out to him, as they went along, all her favourite summer haunts.

After traversing a forest of fir trees—whose peculiar odour in the warm sun struck Marguerite, on that morning, as more than usually fragrant—they reached a wide tract of heath, an angle of which must be crossed before reaching the gentle eminence where stood the ruined chapel. It was a scene rendered grand in its flat monotony by the utter loneliness. As far as the eye could reach, there was no habitation, no trace of man, nothing but the purple moorlands, until they faded away into blue distance, or enormous tracts of untrodden fir forests. Life, however, was not wanting—that mysterious life, which rejoices everywhere, and is most exuberant where man is not. Myriads of gossamers floated on the golden air in their perishing fairy craft; wild bees murmured amidst the gorse; the grasshopper called joyously from his bed of wild thyme; and the lark hovered high in the pure space above, and unburdened his little heart of its melodious gladness.

When they were about half way across the heath, Marguerite pointed out to her companion a singular-looking heap of stones, which

she told him were Druidic remains, and proposed that they should rest there awhile and look about them. "For," she added naively, "the walk will be too quickly over if we get on so fast!"

Philip said he should enjoy nothing better; and they were soon side by side on the highest stone of the pile, which formed a kind of throne among the others. Bello, who accompanied them, but had lingered behind in the forest—where, on the score of old recollections, he was fond of taking private excursions after game, on his own account,—now came up, and extended his grisly length at their feet, shutting his eyes in the sun with luxurious enjoyment of its warmth, and forgetting in his happiness to bestow any more surly looks on the stranger.

"How fair it all is!" said Marguerite at length.

The words recalled to Philip that day, when he sat on Hampstead heath by little Fridoline, and she had made use of a nearly similar expression, and he contrasted in his own mind the immense difference between these two young creatures—one so happy in her ignorance of what is called life, and the other already

weighed down under a premature knowledge of sin.

"Everything must be fair to you, Marguerite."

"Why so?"

"Because you see everything through the medium of your own mind."

She paused. "Then everything is fair to you?"

"No, that is different."

"Tell me why. Do you not see things through the medium of *your* mind?"

"Certainly I do. But—"

"Then they must be fair to you likewise."

"I am afraid not; their beauty is more in the heart which looks at them, than in themselves."

She shook her head. "You know better than I do, of course, but still I think the sky must be as blue, and the air as fresh to you, as to me."

"Everything seems fair and fresh this morning, Marguerite!" he replied softly.

"Does it? I am so glad." And she turned her sweet face to his, with an ex-

pression which made Philip withdraw his gaze, and determine to make her no more pretty speeches.

"What do you do at home?" she asked next.

This was a trying question; for few of Philip's pursuits had been such as he cared to disclose to Marguerite. However, she was unsuspicious as a child, and listened with interest to all he chose to tell her—of dinner-parties and balls, and the opera and the parks, and what people did at all these places.

"And what is London like?" she inquired, when he paused. "Is it at all like Quimper? I have been there twice to the fair, and that is a very large town, too."

Philip tried to describe a great city. She listened with wondering eyes to his accounts of brilliant shops and streets, and carriages, and thought, on the whole, that it must be better than Kersaint! However, she quickly retracted this opinion on hearing that the air was generally too foggy to allow you to see the blue sky, and that there were no birds or flowers, very few trees, and those black.

"I will never go to London, then," she cried, "or at least not to stay there. Bretagne is better!"

Poor child, as she said these words, seated by Philip's side, with the May sun on her cheek, and the delicious feeling of youth and freedom at her heart, how little did she dream where and how her future life was to be passed!

CHAPTER III.

"How long have we been here, I wonder?" said Marguerite, at length.

Philip looked at his watch, and replied that it was two hours since they left home.

"And we are not half way to the chapel yet, and have part of another forest still to cross!" cried Marguerite, jumping lightly down. "You always make me forget the time, monsieur. Come, Bello."

Philip was quickly at her side, and once more they proceeded on their walk. Every object on the way—a stream glittering over white pebbles—an azure butterfly hovering upon some wood-anemone—a solitary primrose

at the foot of an old hawthorn—afforded perfect pleasure to Marguerite; and Philip, who had been bored to death dozens of times by affected enthusiasm on such subjects, delighted in listening to her childish admiration of all the common things of nature. Marguerite possessed the rare gift of language—not book language, she had read too little for that, but an unusual and even poetic turn of expression, when speaking on ordinary subjects, which prevented anything she said from sounding common-place; and her slightly foreign accent and sonorous voice only added to the charm.

Once or twice this morning, Philip had already felt that they both would be in danger by the continuance of this intimate companionship. His own heart whispered that he could not long remain unmoved at the gaze of her clear eyes, and the pressure of her small hand; while, for Marguerite, her excessive youth and innocence made it only too likely that her first and natural love might be awakened for him.

Philip was strictly a man of honour, and he said to himself, "This walk shall be the last."

But he could not now restrain the happiness of his companion, or assume a distant manner towards her, while he remained a guest in her father's house; he could only resolve for the future, and be content with the present: and he was—perfectly content!

They had walked for nearly a mile, when the ground began to rise, and solitary groups of trees stood out here and there, as sentinels of the forest which they were now about to enter. Bello bounded off with a low bark after some wild animal, whose track he had suddenly discovered, and was soon lost among the deepening shadows; while Marguerite conducted her companion to a small bye-path, along which, and through the densest part of the forest, lay a near way to the ruins.

"There are no game-keepers to interfere with Bello's amusements," remarked Philip.

"Game-keepers?" echoed Marguerite.

"Yes—garde chasses, as you call them."

"Oh! I believe there are some; but the forests are so large we never meet them, and besides everyone knows my father, and would not hurt his dog. But do look round," she

cried, "and tell me if there are forests like these in England!"

The mass of foliage around them was indeed singularly beautiful in its variety and early summer freshness. Ash predominated among the larger trees, but there was also a thick undergrowth of cherry, aspen, buckthorn, and wild apple—the latter now rich in scent and blossom. They walked on noiselessly upon the thick, long moss, enjoying the peculiar sweetness of the forest air, and the sounds of existence, with which they were surrounded; the cooing of the wood dove—the measured cry of the lapwing—the happy song of the thrush, and the confused hum from thousands of unseen insects. For, again in this solitude, so rarely trodden by human foot, might be heard, even more audibly than upon the open heath, the beating of that immense pulse of life, which eternally proceeds from, and returns to God—unknown, uncared-for, save by Him.

After a time, Marguerite pointed to what seemed more a deer-track than a path, upon the left hand, and, saying that was their nearest way, she led Philip still further into

the recesses of the forest. So dense, however, was the chaos of vegetation, that their progress was frequently impeded, and, at every step, the scene grew more wildly grand. Here and there some huge oak, overthrown half a century before by age or storm, lay, still supported in its ponderous decay by the stems of the surrounding trees; while bright young creepers, on which the midday sun now glistened, interlaced its trunk in a thousand graceful festoons, that formed airy bridges for the birds and squirrel. And, in some places, the earth itself appeared to have been convulsively rent asunder at some former period, and was traversed by numerous ravines, whose fissures were now partially overhung with briars and huge projecting rocks.

Suddenly, an opening amidst the bushes discovered, almost at their feet, and at some distance beneath them, a large sheet of water, completely studded over with water-lilies. The wood-pigeons were skimming across it—the king-fisher sparkling like a gem amidst the flag-rushes on its banks—while one solitary heron sat patiently watching for prey among the lightning-scathed boughs of a distant willow.

"This I call my lake!" cried Marguerite, pointing to the dark blue water; "I discovered it first when I was quite a child; and like it better than all the others in the forest. There are no water-lilies any where but here; and, when it is very hot weather, I come and sit for hours by that large mossy rock ——"

"Surely you do not come alone to this wild spot?" interrupted Philip.

"Why not? it is too far for my father to venture; and, when Manon does take a walk—which is very seldom, except to church—she prefers going into town, and does not care for my walks. She says there are so many snakes in the forest, and especially by the lake—fancy being afraid of the beautiful blue and gold water-snakes!"

"And do you never fear to meet anyone in your wanderings?"

"Oh, I am very glad, par exemple, if I meet Guillé and Bon Affût, the wood-cutters. They lay down their axes, and always have a chat with the 'little queen,' as they call me. And, if I should meet robbers, why, I have nothing to lose; and you, old Bello, to protect

me,"—and she stretched out her hand to the hound, who had rejoined them.

Philip looked in wonder at this fair young girl, with her noble bearing, and innate grace of soul, who wandered alone through these forests without an idea of danger, and thought it a great pleasure to chat with Guillé and Bon Affût—leading a life of companionless, unchecked freedom, and yet with a refinement a duchess might have envied in her face and manner. He was right when he said Marguerite would be a new study for him.

"We must not linger," she exclaimed; "the sun already darts across the silver beech; it must be three o'clock."

Quitting the side of the lake, they once more began to ascend; and a quarter of an hour's walking brought them into a beaten path which led to the ruins. When they were within a few yards from what appeared to be a sudden opening among the trees, Marguerite cried—

"Now shut your eyes, monsieur, and give me your hand."

Philip, as may be supposed, willingly obeyed;

and she led him on—her face lighting up with the expectation of his surprise—into the ruined chapel, which the trees had hitherto entirely screened from their sight. Then, placing him by the window that she considered the best point of view, quitted his hand abruptly, and told him to look around him.

"You are indeed a fairy!" was Philip's first exclamation. "A moment ago, we were in the gloomy depths of the forest, and now—" He looked around before finishing the sentence, and then acknowledged that a fairer scene had seldom been spread before him.

The little chapel, which stood considerably elevated in the very centre of the forest, although entirely in ruins, still retained some traces of its former beauty in a few delicate columns and pointed arches, and one exquisitely-carved rose window. The accumulation of soil within the walls amounted to eighteen or twenty feet, and, in one part, enabled a good climber to reach the highest fragment of the ruin; and Marguerite had placed Philip close beside the eastern window, which commanded an extensive view of the surrounding

country. At their feet lay—first, the forest itself, its different hues of foliage blending softly in the slanting sun; beyond that, wide tracts of purple lowlands, dotted over with an occasional church-tower, or the remains of some old feudal castle; while, as a background to the whole, rose the sea, rivalling and exceeding in its intense blue the cloudless sky above them.

As Philip still gazed upon the prospect without speaking, an immense sea-eagle floated slowly past, ignorant of the presence of man so near his habitation, and adding a strange sense of wildness to the whole scene. After hovering a few seconds, so close they might almost hear the movements of his graceful black wings, he suddenly made a swoop upon the forest beneath them, and reappeared, holding his prey in his talons. Marguerite pointed out his nest upon the summit of a high oak, whither he presently flew with his prize, and added—

"I know him and his mate well; and often sit here and watch them. The young will be fledged next month. But we must now go to

the very top of the ruin, and you will see Quimper cathedral, if the distance is quite clear. I hope you are a good climber."

She flew with the lightness of a young roe up the loose stones and broken parapets, and Philip was quickly beside her. The kind of platform upon which they stood was only a few yards square, and on one side there still remained a low crumbling wall, three or four feet high; on the others it was completely unprotected: and it required a clear head to look down upon the deep gulf of rocks and foliage beneath.

"You can just see the cathedral," said Marguerite, "like a silver dot in the distance. But you are looking at me again; you must follow the direction of my finger:" and she made him bend his head to the level of her hand.

Philip was almost as slow in discovering Quimper cathedral as he had been in learning bouquet making; however, he succeeded at length, and he then praised the whole fair landscape in terms that delighted Marguerite.

"It is so pleasant here," she cried; "I wish we could sit down for a time and rest,

but I am afraid the ground is not dry enough."

"Most assuredly it is not," returned Philip; "what should prevent you, however, from resting upon the wall?"

"Well"—Marguerite hesitated—"I think it is rather dangerous. Father tells me never to lean over this parapet."

"But if I hold you?"

"It would tire you too much."

"Try, at all events."

Philip lifted her on the wall, which, though decayed, was still perfectly safe and firm, and supported her slight waist with his arm; while Marguerite, her bonnet discarded, and the fresh breeze playing in her hair, seemed drinking in the beauty around her with as much pleasure as though she saw it all for the first time, and only fearing occasionally that she was tiring Monsieur Earnscliffe.

After Monsieur Earnscliffe's wise resolutions of an hour ago, this near neighbourhood was certainly a somewhat inconsistent stroke of policy! Marguerite—never having learnt propriety—had no more idea of indecorum when Philip's arm supported her, than has a London

young lady while waltzing at a hot ball with eighteen consecutive strangers; she liked to enjoy the view,—she wished to rest,—it did not tire her companion to hold her, and that was all. But with Philip it was different.

The soft touch of Marguerite's long curls, as they floated across his hand, her warm breath upon his cheek, her eyes turning every moment to his with their child-like caressing expression—all made his heart beat, and brought to him a bitterer sense of the never-ending tie which bound him to Clara than he had hitherto experienced. With all his knowledge of the world, a few hours in poor little Marguerite's society had already taught him more of the great secret of our existence than he had ever yet learnt!

"Would you not like my life better than London?" she asked, after both had been for some minutes silent. "Confess that you would."

"*Your* life, Marguerite? I should, indeed."

"Then, why not choose it?"

"We cannot always choose exactly what

we prefer. Do you not wish for anything beyond that which you now possess?"

She considered a moment.

"Nothing, but for father to be better."

"You are perfectly happy, then."

"Certainly. I have everything I could wish for in the world—I am well—I am free."

"And what would be your idea of misery?"

"I do not know, I have never considered, —I think, for me, perhaps, the greatest unhappiness would be, to be separated from my father, and confined in some close house in a town,—in London, for example."

"My home!" remarked Philip.

"Well, you acknowledged yourself, that you liked our forest better."

"For a time, yes. But you, Marguerite, will not be a child for ever. Some day you must learn to be a grown-up woman, and obey some one not your father, and give up wandering with Bon Affût, and sitting by the water-lilies."

Marguerite opened her eyes wide at this programme of futurity.

"And why must I do all this?" she asked.

"Is there not a time when the existence of every young girl changes, and she becomes dependant upon the will of another—when,"—her full gaze troubled him—"when she marries?"

Marguerite went into a merry laugh.

"Marry—I marry—Oh! that is too good. Why, I never saw any gentleman yet, but my father! Am I to marry Bon Affût, or the Black Eagle, my only friends? unfortunately both have mates already." (Poor Philip, how those unconscious words stung him!) "No, Kersaint is not a place for weddings. I have only seen two—and those were among the fisher people—in my whole life!" and she laughed on at the ludicrous idea of any one being married from Kersaint.

Young ladies in general blush when they speak of marriage; but Marguerite, being uninformed on this point, seemed to think the subject very amusing.

"And you have never any visitors?" went on Philip.

"Never, except the curé. My father has invited a cousin of ours once or twice in the summer, but he has not come yet."

Philip immediately disliked this unknown relation; and remarked, "Ah! it is the cousin, I see, who will rob Kersaint of its little queen."

"The cousin? why he is older than father, and has had two wives already."

"Oh, but you may have chance visitors, you know—a young artist, or a traveller, for example, suddenly benighted, like myself, and seeking shelter at Kersaint. He might stay on and on, and in time you would not dislike him, and of course from the first he would admire you—and then—"

Was the sun too bright, that Marguerite abruptly raised her hand to her eyes and shaded her cheek? It could not be that, for she turned her face full towards the west, and away from Philip; and he felt that she was blushing.

It was the first blush of womanly feeling that had ever dyed her cheek—and for him! In after years they neither of them forgot that moment.

"I think we should go home," said Marguerite, timidly, at last. "It is time now."

He lingered, still supporting her, and with an unusual emotion in his dark eye, as though a struggle were passing within. Then he replied—

"Yes, it is time," and lifted her gently to the ground, without looking at her face again.

They took a different homeward route through the forest; it was even more beautiful than the other; but Marguerite spoke less now of the birds and flowers than when they came. She walked by Philip's side, and he was very silent. But around *her* the whole air was golden. The waving branches of the trees were kindly arms held out to her as she passed; the very wind, as it swept freshly by, had a kiss for her cheek, and the turf rose lovingly under her feet. Could it be the same lonely path she had so often trod before?

When she reached home, her father said she looked flushed, and must be tired; and, glad of an excuse, she ran up quickly into her own room; while Philip remained conversing with Mr. St. John upon the beauties of the walk, and the wild grandeur of Breton scenery in general.

By her open window, with tearful eyes, Marguerite raised her face to the blue sky, and thanked God for the new-born happiness within her heart.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING the remainder of that day, Marguerite continued somewhat silent. She related to her father at dinner what a delightful walk they had taken, but she was not eloquent; it was greater pleasure to her to be still and think.

Philip, however, conversed much with Mr. St. John, who was every hour better pleased with his guest. Between these two men—dissimilar though they might have appeared in many things—there was yet in reality sufficient resemblance to give them a harmony of ideas and feelings. Both had, in a certain measure, wearied of the world; both had been disappointed in domestic life; the one

through death, the other through a miserable marriage; and in both was the same natural perception of the beautiful, and the power of appreciating keenly all true excellence in art or literature.

Marguerite—without fully understanding the whole of their conversation—listened with delight. Her father's voice (the only one except her nurse's which had murmured love over her cradle) had been the gladness of her sixteen years of life, and the stranger's—low and dangerously musical—was already sweeter to her ear than she dreamed of.

"Have you remarked much of the singularly deep religious feelings among the Breton peasants, or, as some would call it, of their superstition?" asked Mr. St. John, in the course of conversation.

"I have observed that the churches are generally crowded," answered Philip; "and when I have entered them during service, the people appeared to me earnest in their devotions."

"Yes—but their devotion does not end with the service. In every action of a Breton's

life, from his birth to his grave, religion holds a prominent part. A wild religion it is, mixing up the dogmas of the Catholic church with the weird traditions of their Celtic forefathers, in a manner that is certainly more poetic than orthodox! They will frequently, for instance, after attending mass on a saint's day, conclude the evening by gathering round the mystic ring of some prophetess or soothsayer, and listening with the greatest reverence to her visions of futurity—the maidens seeking for knowledge of their married life, the wives for the success and safe return of their sailor husbands. The priests, of course, discourage these practices; but they have too much tact—and indeed, some of them too much sympathy with the people—to run violently against old-established prejudice."

"Father!" broke in Marguerite gravely, "many of old Anaïk's prophecies come true."

"Oh!" said Mr. St. John, smiling, "if you acknowledge to all your superstitions, Marguerite, you will make Mr. Earnscliffe think you a complete little Bas Bretonne. You take Manon's tales on too easy credence."

"What I could tell, is no tale of Manon's," she replied.

"May we not hear it?" asked Philip. "I should like to become acquainted with some specimens of Anaïk's powers."

"Well," said Marguerite, looking away from him as she spoke, "One evening, late in autumn, Manon and I were hurrying home from town. There had been violent storms for several days, and we did not care to linger on the road; but as we passed through Rosnareu —a little hamlet on the coast—a stream of light from one of the cabanes made Manon peep through the window, and she called me to look at a filerie—"

"Which—being translated?" interrupted Philip.

"Is a party of woman who meet together to work and talk. Well, about a dozen of fisher wives were seated round a reed fire, spinning and chatting merrily, and Jean Bruzec's young wife was among them with her baby in her arms. Several other little children were sleeping before the fire at their mothers' feet, and they formed such a pretty group in the

flickering blaze, that I liked to stop and look at them in spite of the cold.

"Suddenly the door opened on the other side of the cabane, and a gaunt, tall figure entered. Manon knew her, and crossed herself; it was Anaïk the prophetess. She was dressed in rags—a sort of wallet of red surge upon her shoulder, and her long grey hair falling about her face. The women all rose and gave place to her on her entrance; but without noticing them she walked up to the fire and warmed her long bony hands over the flame; then turning round to poor Louison, who was bending over her child, she screamed to her in a voice that made me tremble, and with the most fearful look of pleasure upon her face—

"'Louison—wife of Bruzec—listen to me! Once last winter, when the snow was falling fast, and the very birds of the air had found shelter, old Anaïk was out in the cold, blighting blast, without a roof to cover her. Anaïk asked money or bread of Jean Bruzec, and he called her a groac'h—a drunken witch—and said she had bewitched his mother with her

spells. And Anaïk swore that Jean should never see another winter himself. Her words have come true! The last leaves of autumn still hang upon the trees; but among Carnac rocks lies Jean Bruzec, cold, and stark, and dead—and his child is fatherless.'

"One shriek burst from poor Louison, and she fell senseless with her babe upon the ground, while Anaïk, laughing aloud, left the cabane. We were so horrified that we ran on home; but next morning Bruno brought us word from the village, that Bruzec's companions had returned without him; he fell overboard in a gale, two nights before, and was never seen again."

"And a coincidence like this, my child," said Mr. St. John, "strengthens old Anaïk's reputation fourfold; and the dozens of times that she has prophesied falsely are forgotten. You believe even your own songs, little one—"

"Do you sing these Breton tales as well as narrate them?" asked Philip.

"I sing sometimes," answered Marguerite, "but I have never learnt, and I hear no music except at church."

"Yes, that is poor Marguerite's only music

lesson," said her father, "and, as nature has really given her a somewhat remarkable voice and ear, I am glad for her to have even this opportunity for improving herself. The service is extremely well performed at N——, and the organ far superior to what you generally meet with in a remote country town."

"To-morrow is Sunday," said Marguerite, stroking Bello's head, and looking away from the table.

"But you need not go to-morrow."

"Oh! not unless"—she glanced at Philip.

"I should really like to hear the service," he said. "And if you will allow me to accompany you—?"

"Of course," returned Mr. St. John, quietly. "Marguerite is only too happy to exhibit all our wonders; but I fear they cannot give so much pleasure to any one else as herself. And now, as we have finished dinner, let us turn round to the window, and look out awhile. I could bear the open air this soft evening. And do you, Marguerite, sing some of your Breton romances to Mr. Earnscliffe!"

They were dining in the large salle, one of whose bay-windows faced the west, and over-

looked a kind of inland gulf, formed on this side by the sea. The setting sun threw its slanting beams upon Mr. St. John's pale face, when they had wheeled him, wrapped up in a cloak, to the open window, giving him, for the time, almost the hue of health; Philip, somewhat apart, stood leaning against one of the deep stone embrasures; and Marguerite, very flushed at having to sing for the first time in her life before a stranger, was seated on a low, old-fashioned ottoman, in the centre of the group, tuning her guitar, and not daring to look up at Earnscliffe. She played almost entirely from ear, for her father only understood enough of music to teach her the names of the notes, and excepting a few Scotch airs, which she had picked up from him, her songs were mostly wild Breton romances. She hesitated a little when all the strings were tuned, and turning to her father, asked what she should sing to Mr. Earnscliffe?

"What you like, darling What was that I heard you singing to Manon yesterday morning in the garden?"

"Oh, that was only part of a dirge that I

heard the peasants chanting for poor Loubette, but it is very melancholy."

"I should like to hear it," said Philip, speaking for the first time: "I know none of these Breton songs."

Without reply Marguerite struck a few wild chords, and then, gradually subsiding into a low murmuring cadence for accompaniment, she began.

Mr. St. John said rightly that nature had gifted her with no common voice. It was full, deep, and remarkably powerful, and had all that exquisite freshness which belongs only to the very young. She was utterly untaught; but her ear and taste were alike so faultless, that Philip, fastidious though he was in music, soon listened to Marguerite's singing with undisguised pleasure. He had rather dreaded hearing her; thinking it likely her father's opinion was partial, and that a very mediocre performance would take somewhat from the charm of her beautiful face; but he was now forced to acknowledge that of all Marguerite's gifts, her voice was infinitely the greatest.

As she sang, she lost the slight timidity

which had made the first few notes tremble, and forgetting everything but her theme—half of which was an improvisation of her own—her cheeks glowed, and her eyes filled with tears.

The words, which Marguerite translated into French, although wild, and with scarcely any rhyme, had yet no lack of real feeling, and, with the plaintive monotony of the chant, possessed a singular charm. The young girl for whom it was sung had been drowned in waiting for her lover among the rocks; and the distant beatings of the sea, blending with Marguerite's voice, gave a reality to the little romance which was simply told in the funeral dirge.

When she finished, somewhat abruptly, she placed the guitar beside her, and turned round to her father. She was afraid to read in Philip's face what he thought of her music for she was as unconscious of her extraordinary voice as of her own beauty, and felt rather ashamed at performing before him—"he, who lived in London, and must be such a good judge!"

"Will you sing again?" said Philip, in a low voice, after a minute or two's pause.

He was not in a mood to flatter, but the expression of his face showed what he felt, and the invalid was delighted.

"There! Marguerite, our guest wishes to hear you again," he said, "Suppose you try something in your own language now—some of our old Scotch ballads."

With one look towards Philip she obeyed. This time she chose a favourite song of her father's—'The land o' the leal,' and the deep pathos her voice gave to those touching words was indescribable. Mr. St. John's lips quivered as she sang; for Marguerite's voice was like her mother's, and that song always reminded him of the great sorrow of his life; and Philip felt he would rather listen to her ballads than to the finest opera in the world.

She went on from one to another, until the last red rays of the sun had disappeared from the oak carvings round the window, and the freshening breeze warned Mr. St. John that it was already late to be near the open air. Marguerite sprang up hastily, and then, as-

sisted by Philip, she wheeled her father's chair towards the hearth, where Manon had already laid the logs ready for a cheerful blaze.

"But you have not read to me to-day," said Mr. St. John, softly, to his daughter. "I must hear you for half an hour, darling, if Mr. Earnscliffe will excuse us."

Marguerite went at once to the library in search of the sacred volume, which always furnished their evening reading; and Philip, thinking they would probably wish to be alone, said he would enjoy the fresh sea air, and stroll out into the garden with his cigar.

The sun had now completely set. Only one faint streak of light lingered over the horizon, as loath to quit the blue sea upon which it rested; a few stars had already risen; and the wind, which during the day had blown freshly, was sunk into a whisper. Nothing but the gentle plash of the waves—now close beneath the terrace wall—broke the stillness; everything in external nature seemed calm and at peace. But Philip's heart was not so! He walked on to the terrace, and there paced up and down—his arms folded and his lips

compressed—and unconscious of the whole scene around him.

Love, after a day's acquaintance, is generally a somewhat doubtful feeling; but Philip's was just a nature—quick, impulsive, irreflective—in which it could be genuine. He already felt for Marguerite St. John more than he had ever felt for any woman before, and it cost him a bitter pang to reflect that, in his position as a married man, only one right course was open to him—to leave her at once. He said to himself that there was dishonour in remaining one more day under her father's roof in his assumed character; for although he had not said so in words, he had certainly given Marguerite to understand that he was a single man, and her own warm blush, that morning among the ruins, showed—Philip well knew—that his own manner had already gone too far.

"Should he then disclose his true position at once to Mr. St. John, or leave Kersaint?"

From the former course he shrank morbidly. He had resolved on quitting England, to forget his former life as much as possible; he wished

neither his fame as an author, nor his private history to follow him; and had chosen Brittany as the spot on earth where he would be least likely to be recognised. Merely to mention to Mr. St. John that he was married must naturally call forth other explanations, which would lead him back to all his recent trials. And, besides this, there lurked in his heart a feeling that he would rather quit Marguerite at once than stay near her in a different character to that under which she now knew him.

"Then he would leave Kersaint directly. No—that would be too sudden—one more day he must stay—and then speak of going. And in the meantime he would avoid being alone with Marguerite, or even thinking of her. Yes—he had resolved rightly, for a short time longer he would stay."

Philip had an excellent heart, and a sensitive regard to honour; but—and this was the mainspring of all his life's errors—his will was weak, his resolutions wavering. He would torment himself for days upon some point of conscience, which to another man

would appear trivial; yet when a broad path of duty lay before him, as was now the case, he did not enter upon it boldly and at once.

The struggle was over in ten minutes; but on those ten minutes depended the whole after-colouring of Marguerite's life.

The night deepened: millions of worlds began to glisten, like tears in the blue eyes of heaven, over the deep space above, and all the reproaching holiness of nature was around him. Philip turned hastily towards the manoir, where already a bright fire was glimmering through one of the lower windows, and he could trace the outline of Mr. St. John's drooping figure, as he and Marguerite read together. Poor father, ignorant that already another voice than his was sweet to his child's heart!

And once again Philip's conscience smote him.

CHAPTER V.

THE next day was Sunday, and they went to church together; the next, some other little excursion was planned; and so it went on each day, until Philip had been a week at Kersaint, without ever speaking of renewing his travels. He had faithfully guarded over his manner with Marguerite, during this time, and there had been no recurrence of any conversation like that among the ruins. But, although he spoke to her on indifferent subjects, and scarcely ever called her Marguerite, she felt that his eyes sought hers—that his voice softened when he spoke to her—and her whole heart was full of joy.

She was innocent beyond what we in our ordinary life ever meet with—innocent beyond any young creature just leaving the school-room or convent, with cast-down eyes and regulation modesty. True innocence was the state of Eve before she had tasted of the tree of knowledge and learnt to assume, and such was Marguerite's. The blush on her cheek, when she met Philip's gaze, was as natural as the red glow upon a flower, which is kissed by the sun; and she could neither reason it away, nor make it come at her bidding. A new feeling was dawning upon her existence; and she felt within her an unwonted and delicious trouble, though she could not analyze the cause. She knew not that her childhood was dying, and the stronger, deeper, woman's life awakening. She had never read a novel—had never spoken to any one of love; and, had she heard that Philip was married, it would have been a far less shock to her than he imagined. What did she know of marriage, or how connect it with herself?

The love of a very young girl is, I believe, a subject no man can really comprehend.

Grosser from their very cradles, men's whole lives are such as sully their ideas of love; and the purest feeling that was ever felt by one of them, is as clay compared to the pure silver of hers.

With her father's image another now rose before Marguerite at her evening prayers—another to be remembered in her petitions; and if the prayer for the stranger was warmer than that which she had breathed from her infancy, she knew not that it was less pure. She liked to be with Philip—to lay her hand timidly on his—to sing to him—to listen to the poetry he repeated to her—to see his face grow each day less gloomy when with her, and to hear him say he could not bear to leave them.

Nor was her evident pleasure in his society concealed. Mr. St. John—though by no means clear sighted, and so much in his study that he rarely saw them together, except at meal times—had suspicions that Marguerite and the visitor liked each other well, and the thought pleased him. He was greatly attracted towards Philip himself; his whole manner and tone of mind were precisely what

he admired most; and, without really knowing anything about his history, he thought that his child's happiness would be safe in his keeping.

Only one thing more was wanting to complete his predisposition in favour of his visitor, and this shortly occurred.

On the eighth morning after Philip's arrival at Kersaint, they were all seated at the breakfast-table, when the post came in. Not in a uniform and with a double knock, as may be supposed, but in the sudden apparition at the window of Bruno—an uncouth-looking and only half-witted personage, who professed to take care of the garden and poultry, and was sent to N—— to market, when Manon was too busy to go herself. In one sense, he performed this office well—that is, he knew the value of sous and centimes as well as the sharpest market-woman on the 'place,' and bought provisions as cheaply as Manon could herself. But he was obtuse, to the last degree, in understanding that he had no legal right or share in his own good bargains, and always appropriated so large a tithe to his capacious

mouth on his way home, that Manon now rarely trusted him when anything had to be bought that it was possible for him to consume. Even here, once or twice, her judgment had failed her, and half a packet of starch and a quantity of raw salt fish had severally fallen victims to Bruno's indiscriminating palate.

On the morning in question, however, he had been dispatched at four o'clock—Manon's hour for rising—to call at N—— about a new kitchen table that had been ordered, and which Manon rightly conjectured would be safe from his appetite, even were he required to bring it home on his shoulders.

Having performed his commission satisfactorily—*i.e.*, by calling at the carpenter's, and ascertaining that the wood was not yet sawn, which should one day form the stage for Manon's art—Bruno, his great hat slouched over his forehead, and his sheepskin dangling round his ungainly figure, was shambling along through the streets homeward, his stolid eyes fixed intently before him, yet, in reality, observing everyone he met, when, as he passed

the post-office, he heard his own name shouted. Stopping with a jerk, he gazed on all sides but that from whence the sound proceeded, with his mouth wide open, and a look of the most hopeless imbecility upon his face.

"Bruno—dolt—idiot!" reiterated the voice.

Bruno shook his head slowly, as though the person spoken to could not possibly be himself, and then pursued his road.

"Bruno!" called the voice. He did not turn.

"Monsieur Bruno—Monsieur Bruno!" now sounded faintly.

A grin distorted Bruno's wide mouth, and, chuckling to himself at his new title of dignity, he turned and beheld the post-mistress, her head outstretched through the small window of the bureau, which also formed her sitting-room, and holding something in her hand.

"A newspaper for M. St. John," she explained, as he approached; "just take it with you, good Bruno."

Good Bruno was aware that Kersaint was distant more than one league from N——, and that, by taking the paper, he saved the

post-mistress, or her son, from walking that distance, and he made no sign of receiving it.

"Bruno is no postman," he muttered, in his most stupid manner. "Poor Bruno!" pointing to his forehead.

"But that does not signify," urged the lady. "Come, take it at once, your master will wish to see it."

"And if Bruno won't take it?"

"I must send it, you"—fool she would have added, but refrained until her point was gained.

"And who pays you?"

"Pays me? why government; only you don't know what that means, and little enough too!"

"And who pays Bruno?"

"Oh! that is it, is it?" returned the post-mistress. "You think you must be paid like anybody else;" and with a great show of generosity, she produced a five-centimes piece. "There, take this, and be off."

But Bruno shook his head; and not until he had stood out for half-an hour, and finally obtained ten centimes, would he receive the

paper. Then he started at a quicker pace than usual, his face beaming with the double delight of having to tell Manon that her table was not yet begun, and that he had realized ten centimes for himself. After this fashion the post usually came in at Kersaint.

The newspaper was sent by 'the cousin,' Mr. St. John's only remaining correspondent in England, who wrote to him about once a year, and sent a paper every six months. It was merely intended as a sign that he was living and well; and was generally a month old when it reached Kersaint. Marguerite, however, always hailed its arrival as a kind of event, and would read aloud the advertisements of new books to her father, and wish she had got them all.

"May I open it, father?" she asked, when she had finished her colloquy with Bruno, through the open window, and he had related with great glee in his Breton patois, how he had outwitted the post-mistress.

"Certainly, child!" and he went on talking to Philip.

Marguerite knew where to find the literary

advertisements, and turning to that part, began reading them over to herself. Suddenly the colour rushed into her face, and she exclaimed aloud—

"Mr. Earnscliffe!"

"What have you found, Marguerite?" said her father.

She rose, without replying; and pointed to the part which had called forth her astonishment. It was the announcement of 'A new edition of Mr. Philip Earnscliffe's last successful work.' Mr. St. John looked a little surprised, and read the notice over twice, without speaking—then he turned to Philip.

"My daughter has found out a literary namesake of yours, Mr. Earnscliffe; the name is so uncommon, as to make this coincidence somewhat remarkable,"—and he handed him the paper.

Philip coloured as his eye glanced over it. This was certainly the part of his history he cared least about revealing; still, he would have been better pleased had the discovery not taken place. Now he could conceal it no longer.

"I must acknowledge," he said, "that Philip Earnscliffe, the author, is no other than myself."

"Oh, father!" burst from Marguerite, "he is a great author, after all."

"And a modest one," added Mr. St. John. "Few men of your age, Mr. Earnscliffe, like their fame to pass incognito, even among such simple people as ourselves."

"Well," replied Philip, "the fact is, I have been so often wearied to death, when listening to other writers talking about their own works, that I resolved to adopt the opposite extreme, and never speak of mine at all."

"And you have kept well to your resolution. Still, though you never told me you were an author, I have more than once suspected that your talents had not lain idle all your life, and, the other day, was nearly questioning you on the subject. You seemed so thoroughly au fait of all literary matters and people, that I could not but think you were one of the fraternity yourself."

During the time her father spoke, Marguerite read and re-read the advertisement,

and then looked long at Philip, trying to connect her kind, simple companion with the successful Mr. Earnscliffe. She felt rather awed at seeing a living author; and thought with shame how he had listened to all *her* childish conversation, and of the immeasurable distance there must henceforth be between them; she so ignorant; and he in all the dignity of acknowledged authorship.

"What are the books about, father?" she whispered, at length, not daring to address Philip.

"Why do you not ask Mr. Earnscliffe?" he replied, aloud.

She turned away her face.

"Marguerite is afraid of you in your newly-discovered character, I believe."

"I hope not," replied Philip, "or I shall, indeed, regret that my secret is known."

Marguerite glanced at his face, and felt that there was no fresh gulf between them; and all her confidence returned.

"What are they about, then?" she cried, returning to her chair, which she drew quite close to his side. "Are they poetry or

stories? Have you written many? And please tell me their names."

And Philip, when he once began to reply, was cross-questioned with such earnestness, for a good half-hour, that Mr. St. John, although nearly as much interested as Marguerite, at length told her that she would tire Mr. Earnscliffe.

"Well!" she pleaded, "only one thing more, then—may we see any of your books?"

Philip replied that he had not a copy with him, and her countenance fell.

"But if you would really like to possess some of them, I will write a line to my publisher, and ask him to send them in a packet to Kersaint. They will remind you of me when they arrive; and I am gone."

"Gone!" echoed Mr. St. John and Marguerite, together, in a tone that spoke the sincerity of their surprise.

"Oh! do not go," the latter, softly added. "Father, do not let Mr. Earnscliffe go!"

"I thought you were to remain in Brittany half the summer!" urged Mr. St. John.

"But not trespassing on your hospitality," Philip replied.

"My dear sir, you are conferring a simple favour upon an invalid like myself in remaining here; and Marguerite, for the first time in her life, has the pleasure of being with a youthful companion, and listening to another voice than mine. We have so little to attract you that I cannot press you to remain; but it will pain me to bid you farewell."

His manner was even kinder than his words. Philip felt that the invalid really wished him to stay with him, and it coincided but too well with his own desire. Conscience, however, once more urged him to leave Marguerite, and he faintly pleaded something about his wish to visit all the remoter parts of Brittany.

"Of course, you should do so," returned Mr. St. John; "but you could not choose a more central spot for this object than Kersaint. Have your luggage sent here from Quimper" (where Philip had left it), "and make this head-quarters. You can take excursions without end, and return every few days to rest, and give us the pleasure of your society."

Marguerite did not speak, but she watched

his face. He paused irresolutely, a sense of duty still warring with inclination; then he said, hesitatingly—

"I really do not like, stranger as I am, to accept your kind invitation—"

"If that is all," interrupted Mr. St. John, "your objection is at an end. I do not consider you a stranger already, and, besides, all the world may claim to know a celebrated writer. I look upon you as our promised visitor for many weeks to come."

And Philip, overcome by Mr. St. John's warmth and his own wishes, accepted. The note was written that morning, and dispatched to his publisher; and Marguerite counted the days that must elapse before the books could, by any possibility, arrive. Philip said his last work was for her father, but the earlier ones —the poems and tales—were for her. And when he added, "Will you accept them as your own from me?" she could scarcely answer for delight.

CHAPTER VI.

THEY generally walked together by the sea for an hour or two at sunset; and on the evening of this day, Marguerite had more than usual to say. She was never weary of asking Philip about his writings—trying to make him repeat aloud any passages he could remember—and only discontinued when she, at length, saw he really did not relish the subject. But she wondered extremely how he could prefer their usual strain of conversation, to speaking of what engrossed all her thoughts. "It is because he thinks me so childish, and that I am not able to understand him," she said to herself.

After wandering for some time, they rested

upon a high rock, which stood somewhat apart from its fellows, and watched the tide come in. Although the weather was still fair, there was a good deal of wind, and the waves were high—each bearing a wreath of foam, that the red sun converted into flame, and which formed a singular contrast to the cool pearly green of the water beneath.

"I like to feel the spray upon my face," said Marguerite. "How can people be happy away from the sea?"

"Do you not like the country better?"

"You mean the fields and forests? well, I like them too, and I could not bear to leave them; but I love the sea! Trees and flowers are merely beautiful, but the sea is living, and it has been my companion all my life. It has a thousand voices and expressions that I can understand: it can smile like a human face in the sunshine, or moan and wail like no other voice, when it casts up the drowned fishermen on the shore: it can break and surge over these huge black rocks, and even uproot them from their resting place, as it did yonder Kernot cliff last winter. Yes, the sea is full of life and

power, and I love it! Think how dull it would be here in winter without the roaring of the waves!"

Philip smiled. "Do you consider that a cheerful sound?" he asked.

"Not cheerful, it is grand: and when we have clear, frosty weather for a few weeks, and the waves are still, it seems quite lonely." She sang a note or two from an old ballad, then was silent. After some minutes Philip said, abruptly—

"Sing to me, Marguerite! I feel ill at ease this evening, and I should like to hear your voice in the open air, with only the fall of the waves for an accompaniment; sing something low and melancholy."

After pausing to select what would please him, she began one of her plaintive, old Scotch songs. Her voice sounded unusually sweet, and Philip leant back against the rock, —his hat pulled forward to shade his eyes from the slanting sun—gazing at her profile, and listening to her rich tones with a perilous keenness of delight. His poet's temperament made him subject to a thousand

temptations from which another man would have been free; and a soft half-hour at sunset could at any time turn into nothing his strongest resolutions.

"That was delightful, Marguerite!" he whispered, when she had finished.

"Was it?" she replied. "Does it really give you pleasure to hear me? I suppose my voice must be good, then."

"In all London I never heard a voice like yours, off the stage. If you took lessons for two years, you would be a first-rate singer. Would you not like to be courted and sought after in society for your extraordinary talent and beauty?" He wished to see if any desire for admiration—that strongest feeling with most women—lay dormant in the girl's heart.

"No," she returned, after thinking a little. "I am quite sure it would give me no happiness. I should not care for all the people at these great parties you tell me of, and I should not value their praises—how can it signify what strangers think of you? The praise of one or two would be sufficient for me. I should like to be beautiful, and loved, I confess, but I would rather not be celebrated."

"You are right!" said Philip. "Fame is wearisome in the pursuit, unsatisfactory in possession."

"Oh, you should not say so!" Marguerite interrupted. "I only meant that for myself I could not value it. If I were a man, I should be ambitious; and I should like my brother, if I had one, to be very celebrated. I could glory in *his* success."

It was a dangerous remark. Philip's eyes softened as they rested upon Marguerite's glowing face; and he remembered Lady Clara and her sympathy with him.

"What might I have been," he thought, "if I had had this girl for my wife?—what might I still be, if I were now free to choose? Could you not extend this feeling to any but a brother?" he went on, aloud. "If at any future time, for instance, you hear that I am a very celebrated writer, will it give you no pleasure?"

She drew nearer to him, and replied, looking up kindly in his face—

"It would give me more pleasure than anything in the world. Except my father, you

are my only friend, and I should like to hear of you as though you were really my brother. But that will never be!" she added, mournfully. "When you leave Kersaint, I feel it will be for ever, and I shall not even hear your name again."

"You are wrong, Marguerite; I shall return here next summer if I live."

"Will you promise that? It will give me something to hope for during the winter."

"If you are all still here, I promise it," Philip replied; but he felt too truly that by another summer Marguerite might be an orphan.

"I hope I shall be improved," she resumed, timidly; "my father is going to teach me so much next winter, and I shall have a greater interest in learning now. How do you think he has looked the last day or two?"

"I think he varies much," answered Philip, evasively.

A week's observation had convinced him that Mr. St. John was wasting away under the slow, sure influence of consumption, and that his occasional good spirits and heightened

colour were merely symptoms of his treacherous disease.

"But on the whole he is better?"

Her wistful tones, as though she half feared his answer, smote him.

"I trust your father may be long spared," he replied. "But I think his state requires the greatest care."

"He is so melancholy," said Marguerite, "and when we are alone I find it difficult to cheer him. He thinks more than ever of my mother now."

"She must have died very young," Philip remarked.

"Yes—I believe before she was twenty; but Manon could tell you better about her than I can. She died directly after I was born, and they say she never even saw me. But I wish I had not been told that; I cannot bear to think that I was never—no, not for a minute—in my mother's arms; it makes me unlike all other children!"

Philip took the poor little hand as it wiped away her tears and pressed it.

"Do you like to speak of her or not?" he said, gently.

"Yes—I like it—but I never do so to my father; it makes him look so wretched; and Manon will not say much of her either. But on my birthday she always will—it is my treat, the greatest of all the year—and then we sit together in my own room, and Manon tells me of my beautiful young mother, and shows me some of her things. She died of some complaint of the heart; and, do you know, I have often thought I shall die of it also! They tell me I am like her in everything; and at times I have a sudden painful feeling—here—which makes me feel there must be something wrong. Do you think it is likely?" She looked at him very earnestly.

Philip drew her to his side, and pressed his lips upon her long shining hair. The action was involuntary, and the feeling which prompted him innocent. At that moment, Marguerite was a perfect child, and he would have done the same had she been six, and not sixteen; but it was a fatal precedent!

"You should not give way to these thoughts," he replied; "they might really injure you, and are without foundation. Both

of my own parents died young of decline, yet you see I am strong and well; and you, Marguerite, have the very bloom of health upon your cheek. You must never indulge these fancies again!"

"No!" she answered, "I will not, after what you say. But I never mentioned it before to anyone, though I have often thought of it. I should be sorry to die, now that my father seems getting better, and that *you* have come to us."

She had not shrunk from his side, and there was no blush upon her cheek now. Speaking of her dead mother, and of her own secretly-cherished forebodings of an early death, the feeling of timidity which she occasionally experienced towards Philip was forgotten, and he might in reality have been her brother—at that moment.

And so they remained: until the sun was fairly set, and the features of each grew less distinct in the twilight, and they drew closer together as the fresh night-wind rose from the sea. Then Philip could hear the quick beatings of her heart, and her tremulous breath

amidst his hair, and his own pulse grew unsteady. The delicious dawn of first love was upon them both. That time when to breathe the same air—to be silently at each other's side, is in itself happiness all-sufficing—that time which is the last remnant of Eden still left to us—the only passionate delight that bears no track of the serpent.

At length Marguerite said it was time for her evening reading with her father, and she must go.

"Stay," said Earnscliffe, still holding her hand; "another moment—Marguerite, I have something to say to you."

What words were those which hung upon his lips? Fresh words of cruel tenderness, or a tardy avowal of his marriage? For that time, at least, Marguerite did not hear them. She had turned as he spoke towards the distant manoir, and saw her father standing at one of the lower windows. She rose to her feet.

"Not now; he is waiting for me. Tell me to-morrow morning, before you set out. I shall be up very early, and we will come out

on the terrace together; but I cannot keep him waiting now." And she ran quickly towards the house.

Philip followed her slowly, and was soon pacing up and down, with his cigar, on the terrace—his usual evening walk. He had already planned to start on the morrow for an excursion of several days, and he felt now, more than ever, that it was time for some change—that every hour he remained was perilous. It was in vain that he argued with himself how pure were his feelings towards Marguerite, and that, were he free, he would gladly make her his wife, and give up all the excitement of his past life for quiet domestic happiness. He was *not* free. Each pressure of her hand—each whispered word to her—were so many derelictions, faint, but progressive, from the path of honour; and Marguerite's ignorance of wrong, and her father's perfect trust in him, made his position the graver.

"If I had Neville's strong will," thought Philip, "with my own conscientious scruples, I should have left them at once. He might see no harm in the passing deception, and

treat it all as the amusement of a few summer weeks; but at least he would act honestly up to his conviction, whilst I"—his reverie was here interrupted by a footstep advancing from the garden, and, turning round, he distinguished Manon's square, solid figure, as it approached him in the dusky light.

Manon held the opinion common amongst French persons of her class, that to be alone is the summit of human misery, and as the supper did not then require her attention, she had purposely joined Philip for a little conversation. She had an immense liking for the handsome young Englishman, but he was so engrossed all day with Marguerite, that she had rarely a chance of speaking to him alone.

"It is a dull evening, monsieur; I am sorry to see you by yourself."

"And you have kindly come to bear me company, Manon; I have not seen you all day."

"No, you have been on the beach, or away with mademoiselle, as usual. Poor child! it does my heart good to see her with a companion, after her life of solitude."

"She was talking to me, for the first time to-day, of her mother," said Philip.

"Was she so, monsieur? Yes, it is her favourite subject, but I do not allow her to dwell much upon it; it is not well for the young to brood over death and sorrow. Her mother! she grows more like her every day." Manon raised her brown hand to her eyes.

"Was she as beautiful as her daughter is now?" Philip asked.

"Yes," returned Manon, "and as sweet and loving. Ah, monsieur! hers was a sad young life—so sad, you would not care to hear it told."

"On the contrary, I should feel the greatest interest in it. In anything concerning Mr. St. John," he added.

"Well, monsieur, if it will pass away the time for you, I will tell it. I am sure I may confide anything to you with safety; but you will see, without my asking you, that it is not a subject for you to mention again to my master."

She seated herself on a low bank at one end of the terrace, in the attitude consecrated from

time immemorial to the teller of a story—her head erect, and her hands crossed—while Philip leant against the balustrade at her side, and prepared to listen.

The sky was now overcast, and the occasional cry of the owl, and the mournful beatings of the sea, formed a fit prelude for the history of Marguerite's mother.

CHAPTER VII.

"I WAS just sixteen," said Manon, "when I first entered into the service of Monsieur le Comte de Josselin. He was one of the oldest seigneurs in Brittany, though no longer rich; indeed, the vast possessions of his family had dwindled down, they said, to scarcely more than the old château and estate of Beaumanoir, near Quimper, where he lived with madame la comtesse and their only child, Mademoiselle Lilla.

"I was her foster sister; and, next to her own parents, she loved none so well as me. When we were both children, she saved all her treasures and dainties to share them with me, and she would leave all her companions to

come and play with me and our goat upon the moor. I can see her now, in her little white dress, plucking the marguerites de pré, and the coquelicots, to hang them round Mimi's neck!

"Well, when I was sixteen, and mademoiselle a few months younger, the first grief of my own life came—my mother died. My father—who was old and infirm—was henceforth to live with my married sister; and I was, in a manner, cast upon the world. But Mademoiselle Lilla entreated her parents with such earnestness that I might be taken into the château, that they at length consented, and I became her own maid—or rather her companion, for she always treated me as a sister—and, in the happiness of being with her, my grief for my mother's death gradually diminished, and we were again like children together.

"She was at that time the most beautiful creature I ever beheld. Her hair was more golden than Marguerite's—her eyes of a softer blue; and her whole face and figure had something reminding me of the picture of

Our Lady in the cathedral, as it looks in the moonlight. But, though she was fragile and delicate, mademoiselle had high spirits; and it would have done your heart good to hear her merry laugh ringing through the gloomy rooms of the old château. Her parents doted on her—I have never denied them that—but they were both proud and fond of money—madame la comtesse especially; and, when they looked at their daughter's sweet face, I believe—God help them!—they thought more of the grand marriage it would enable her to make, than of anything else.

"When my foster-sister was just seventeen, her cousin, the Marquis de St. Leon, came to stay with us. He was about six-and-twenty, slight, fair, with dark eyes, and a low voice—a voice not unlike yours, monsieur—and I saw, from the first day, he would love her. Soon his eyes never left mademoiselle; and, as they all walked up and down under the charmille, in the summer evenings, I could see him continually at her side, and I knew how it would be.

"Shall I confess to you that a feeling of

jealousy crossed me at the idea? I knew that it was wicked, that of course she must marry some day, and I become nothing to her; but still I felt it. She was all *I* had in the world, and I could not bear that she should take any of her love from me

"Gradually I saw a change come over her! she no longer cared for our childish games, she was silent and thoughtful, and would blush whenever her cousin's name was mentioned. At length, one day she ran hurriedly into my little room as I sat working, her face all flushed and tearful, but so happy, and laying her head on my bosom, she told me that the marquis had proposed for her, and had been accepted. Even in her new joy she did not forget me; but said I was her dear sister still, and that I should continue to live with her after she married; and I was ashamed that I had ever felt jealous of her cousin.

"He was believed to be rich; for a good patrimony was said to have descended to him a few months before, on his father's death, and my master and his lady appeared well satisfied with the engagement. Our Bishop

—Monseigneur, at Quimper—wrote off to the Pope of Rome for a dispensation (because they were first cousins) : they were soon formally betrothed to each other, and then the marquis returned to Paris to arrange his affairs, while at the château preparations for the wedding were began at once."

"It would weary you to tell the excitement and bustle we were all in. Mademoiselle Lilla was the gayest of us all, and her cheeks bloomed brighter than they had ever done before. It was not a marriage like most others, do you see, merely made up between parents without consulting their children's hearts: she loved her cousin truly, and looked forward to a life of quiet happiness with him when she should become his wife.

"The marquis had been gone about three weeks, and we now expected him back for good in a few days, when the wedding was to take place. Mademoiselle got a little paler as the time drew on, and appeared more thoughtful again. I believe the near approach of a great happiness makes one tremble, or perhaps a secret foreboding of coming evil might have

hung over her; but, however this was, all the preparations went on as usual, until one morning, when two letters arrived from Paris for my master—and put an end to all our joy and hopes.

"He was walking on the terrace with madame la comtesse, when they were given to him; and mademoiselle and I were watching them from the window of her own sitting-room, where we generally spent the forenoon together. The reading of these letters seemed to produce an extraordinary effect upon the comte and his wife, yet it did not exactly appear that they had received bad tidings; on the contrary, after consulting long together, there was a triumphant look upon the face of my lady, when they returned towards the house, which made me shudder without any real reason, and my foster sister threw her trembling arms round my neck, and said she knew her mother's smile boded no good to Henri. She never personally liked him, and I believe, although she accepted his suit, she thought her daughter ought to have married a prince at least.

"In about an hour's time, a knock came at the door, and a femme de chambre entered, and told mademoiselle that monsieur le comte wished to speak to her in the library. Her hand, which was fast clasped in mine, turned as cold as ice at this message; however, she immediately rose to obey, and telling me to remain there until her return, she walked slowly from the room.

"I waited long—so long, it seemed to me like hours—before she came back, tormenting myself with thinking of all that could have happened; but when, at length, the door opened, and she tottered in, I felt sure none of my fears had been bad enough. Monsieur, did you ever see a young face gain the expression of years of misery in one day? if so, you can imagine how Mademoiselle Lilla looked. She was not pale—she was ashy; and there was a look—a fixed, hard look—upon her soft features, which made her seem positively old. It was the first time I ever saw anything of her mother in her face.

"'Oh, mademoiselle!—oh, my darling!' I cried; 'what is the matter? Is Monsieur Henri dead?'

"She seated herself without speaking, and remained so for several minutes; then she turned, and said, in a harsh, and altered voice—

"'Manon, never mention his name to me again. Dead, no, a thousand times worse; would, God, he *were* dead!'

"She moved about that day and the next like a thing of stone; on the third, she told me to come with her and walk. I remember well it was a mild autumn day, and we wandered through the woods until we reached a small kind of temple that stood by the lake, at some distance from the château. She had used to come here with her cousin when they were engaged; but after he left, we had had no leisure for walking, and this was the first time she had visited it since.

"'Let us rest,' she said; 'I am weary.'

"She looked very pale, and I opened the door of the temple for her to go in. There, upon the rustic table, lay a bunch of withered flowers—they had gathered them in their last walk together among the woods, and afterwards forgotten in their happiness—and close

beside them was one of Monsieur Henri's gloves. For a moment she stood still, her lips drawn tightly together, and her hands clenched; then, with a stifled cry, she seized the glove, pressed it to her lips—her bosom, uttered a thousand tender words over it, and burst into a flood of tears.

"They were the first she had shed; and I believe those tears saved her reason.

"When slowly she recovered, the unnatural firmness had left her face, and of herself she began speaking of her cousin. Still holding his glove in her trembling hands, she told me her father had discovered accidentally that he was unworthy of her; that he was leading the most wild and dissipated life, and at the very time of their engagement had made his profligacy, and his intended marriage with her, alike a boast and a jest among his companions.

"'And I wrote him,' she went on—'I wrote him a letter at once; my mother dictated it—I could not think for myself—but I know that I gave him back his false love, and told him from that moment he was free, and

that I thanked God I was so too. I could not write it now,' she added, softly; 'for though I would not be his wife, I forgive him everything; and, Manon, Manon, I love him still!'

"She carried back the withered flowers, and the glove. Ah, monsieur! she never parted with them again, as you will see.

"The winter set in early and severe; and mademoiselle grew so pale and thin, that I feared greatly for her health. Her parents, too, at last took alarm. I think her mother must have felt some pangs of self-reproach when she looked at her child's face, and knew it was her own work; she was, however, entirely taken up with a new scheme, and perhaps that prevented her from seeing Mademoiselle Lilla as others did.

"It appeared that one of the letters on that fatal morning, was a proposal of marriage from a gentleman of great riches, but about three times her age, who had seen mademoiselle at a country fête some months before; and either was, or pretended to be, ignorant of her engagement to her cousin. They had

written to him without consulting their daughter, but, as she afterwards told me, begged him to wait for a few months, on account of her extreme youth. Madame la comtesse judged rightly, that it would be well to let her first sorrow pass away before speaking to her again of marriage. When at length, however, she thought the time come, and *did* ask her consent to marry this new suitor, she was surprised at mademoiselle's decided rejection of him. 'I shall never marry Henri,' she said, 'but I will have no other—at least, not yet. Give me one year, mother, before you speak to me of those things again.'

"Madame la comtesse was proud and grasping for wealth; but still she was a mother, and she could not withstand her poor child's mournful face, so they unwillingly wrote and told this gentleman, that their daughter's health was too delicate for her to think of marrying at present, and shortly afterwards we all went to Paris for the winter.

"They had several grand physicians for my foster-sister, and they all said she had as yet

no positive disease; but that she had a disposition to something of the heart—I forget what they called it, it was a long word—but I knew what the complaint was better than they, and could have given it a shorter name—her heart was breaking.

"She went to parties and balls—'she must be amused,' they said, 'and forget the past;' but, when she came home each night, weary and pale, and would weep upon my breast, in all her silks and flowers, I thought she would have been better sleeping quietly in her grave. She never met her cousin; for, immediately he received her letter, we were told he had gone right away to India, or America—I don't rightly know which—so, at least, she was spared the pain of seeing him again.

"Well—I must not keep you in the cold too long—when we had been in Paris about four months, mademoiselle met an Englishman in society, who pleased her better than all the gay young men she had known as yet; and that was my master—Mr. St. John. He was pale and quiet, even then, but had, I used to think, a look of her cousin, which may have

struck her too. At all events, she liked him; and when after a few weeks he proposed to her, she said to her mother, 'Let me marry Mr. St. John?'

"I was in the room at the time—for they kept nothing from me—and she never blushed or cast down her eyes, as she had done for the marquis; she was quite earnest, but cold and quiet. I believe she chiefly thought of leaving Paris and all these gay parties; and she did not remember, poor child! that she had no love to give with her hand.

"It was a dreadful blow to her parents, after all their schemes. The doctors said, unless they allowed her to marry as she liked, and at once, she would die; and they had no choice but to consent. Mr. St. John, however, was not a rich man, and did nothing but read and write books; so, after all, mademoiselle made, what is called, a very poor marriage, although, God knows, she gained a true and faithful heart in my master.

"After the wedding, her first words to her husband were, 'Let me go back to the country.' And he took a pretty place not far

from Paris, where they passed the first year of their marriage. I remained with them, you may be sure; and when at last a fair little daughter was placed in my darling's arms, I thought her old smile had come back for good, and that she would grow really well and happy. My master loved her beyond everything on the earth—he thought of nothing but her; and she was so sweet and gentle, that it was only natural he should believe she loved him in return; for he had never heard anything about her former engagement with the marquis.

"When the baby was a few months old, a distant relation of her mother's died, and left this property of Kersaint to my young mistress. I believe it was very acceptable to them; for her father's estate, as he had no son, would go to an uncle on his death, and he had nothing but that to leave. And, besides this, Mr. St. John, who was too book-learned to understand money, had lent nearly all his to a relation to be put out in business, and he had just failed at the time of the child's birth. So they decided for the present to come and live quietly at Kersaint.

"They had many friends in Paris; and though neither of them cared about society, they were persuaded to go there for a few weeks before starting for Bretagne.

"That was a fatal decision, monsieur.

"They were invited out a great deal; and one evening they had gone to a grand fête at some foreign ambassador's, and I, as usual, was sitting up to undress my mistress on her return, when I heard the carriage enter the porte cochère of the hotel an hour or two earlier than I had expected. I ran out with a light into the great corridor to meet them, and after waiting some minutes, I saw Mr. St. John supporting his wife with difficulty up the stairs. She was just as white as the day when she broke off with her cousin, and had something the same expression on her face.

"'Eh, mon Dieu!' I cried, 'what has happened?'

"'Your mistress has been taken suddenly ill,' replied my master, quite calm, though he, too, was very pale. 'Get her to bed, good Manon, and watch with her through the night —it is best for her to be kept perfectly quiet.'

"He left us at the door of the sleeping-room, and I *did* watch with her through that dreadful night. At first she was faint and unconscious—but that soon passed, and the worst was then to come. All she said I could not tell you; but I gathered from her delirious talk that in the middle of the ball she had suddenly seen her cousin, whom she believed far away in America. He had spoken to her, and asked her to dance; instead of that, however, they had gone into another room alone, and there for the first time she heard the truth.

"The letter which her father had received, on the same morning with the fresh proposal for her hand, was from Monsieur Henri, saying, that on looking into his affairs, they were not so straight as he believed—his father in fact, had been extravagant, and the money did not all come clear to the marquis. But in the letter he had asked for time, and said he would start gladly for foreign parts, and try to win more money for himself, if his cousin would only wait for him.

"'And they never told me this,' she cried. 'They deceived me, cruel father, cruel mother,

they deceived me, and I wrote him that letter! I thanked God that I was free! when I would have died for him, when I loved him—when I love him still.' And she took his glove from the place where it always lay with the withered flowers, and wept over it, till I thought she would die from weeping. I never saw such grief before, or since, and I think it was the worse coming from one so gentle as my mistress.

"Towards morning I bethought me of something that might soothe her; and as I had now persuaded her to lie down in her bed, I crept from the room to the baby's nursery, and wrapping it in a shawl, I brought it back sleeping, and placed it in her arms. For one moment, monsieur, she shrunk back from her child. It was only a moment, however. The next she covered it with kisses, and hugged it to her heart. It woke; and seeing its mother, gave a soft cooing cry, and held out its hand to her breast—the little touch I suppose recalled everything to her, that she was another man's wife, and a mother, for she attempted to check her sobs, and I could see that she was praying over the child."

"She was long dangerously ill; but, as soon as she could be moved, we came down to Kersaint. When I think of my master during that time, I believe I pity him most of all. I was afterwards told that at the ball when my mistress fainted, he overheard some of the guests saying each to other. 'Ah! Madame St. John has met her old lover—poor husband!' And this was the first he ever knew of her former engagement. At all events he never looked the same after that night.

"The sea air and change seemed to do her good; and she tried so hard not to repine, and to be thankful to live, that her husband could not but forgive her—indeed, he was soon more devoted to her than ever. He is unlike all other men; and when from her self he heard the whole story, and how she had been deceived, he forgot his own disappointment, and only tried to make up to her with his love for what she had lost.

"A year passed by; and, though she was not worse, I could see that she did not really gain strength. At times her colour was high, and she would rally, and sing to him, and play

with the child; but, suddenly, her hand would be pressed to her heart, and the faint shade round her lips told me she was suffering inward pain. At the end of that year the child died—died of croup—in the night, when we all thought she had fallen asleep in perfect health; and, from that hour, I knew we should lose my mistress. She showed no passionate grief—she scarcely wept for the child; but, when she hung over the little body in its coffin, she smiled; and I could see she was only parting with it for a short time. It was the last thing that kept her to life.

"And now she faded rapidly; every day I saw a change; but what made it worse was, that she expected soon again to be a mother. She liked to be carried out by my master to the terrace, and would sit there for hours, watching the sea, with a kind of dim look upon her face, but seldom speaking. When I tried to rouse her, for the sake of the unborn babe, she would only say, 'Pray God, Manon, that it be not a girl! I do not wish to bring another sorrowful life into the world.'

"While she was strong enough to sit up,

however, she embroidered a little cap for the child—I have it now, monsieur—Marguerite would sooner look at it than at all the treasures on the earth—and said, when it was finished, 'This is all I shall ever do for my child.'

"She knew she would die at its birth—and she was right. She never even rallied enough to hold it in her arms. But, on the morning of that day, she said to me, 'Manon, be faithful to my husband, as you have been to me, and never leave him and my child.'

"I promised her, and I have kept my word. Monsieur, I feel the first drops of a thunder-shower—and it is supper time."

CHAPTER VIII.

MANON'S prediction was right. A violent thunderstorm broke that night over Kersaint; and, when Philip prepared to depart at an early hour on the following morning, the weather was still dark and lowering.

"You had better not go," said Marguerite, as they sat alone together at breakfast (Mr. St. John having taken leave of his visitor the previous evening), "I am sure there will be another storm, and one day can make no difference."

Philip, however, knew that each day *did* make a difference; and, for once, he remained

firm. He went; and Marguerite felt that her whole life had become blank.

The days succeeding his departure were dark and gloomy. Mr. St. John, who was affected by every change of weather, was not so well, and kept to his own room, and the lonely silence of her home struck Marguerite as it had never done before. She could not take the old interest in her birds and flowers, but she was too restless to remain within doors; and, except at those times when she was with her father, spent the entire day in wandering near the sea, listening to its soothing, familiar voice, and dreaming those first dangerous dreams which further the progress of an absent lover, far better than his own presence.

Philip was away more than a fortnight, exploring among the wilds of the Menès Arres hills, and the Loc Mariaker lakes. The lone grandeur of the scenery, and the character of the people among whom he passed, really interested him; he needed a strong contrast to his soft, artificial life, and here he found it. But in his wanderings, with no companion save

his own thoughts, he had unfortunately quite as much a time for dreaming as Marguerite; and he returned to Kersaint with his heart fuller of the little 'wild daisy,' than when he started.

During his absence the packet of books had arrived from London, and were opened, as Philip requested they should be, by Marguerite. In addition to the copies of his own works, he had ordered several new books which he thought would interest Mr. St. John, and one or two of a different nature for Marguerite. But all these she laid aside; they were not his, and she scarcely thought of them again. The name of Philip Earnscliffe upon the title-pages of his works, had, for her childish eyes, a charm beyond everything she could have imagined. She made her father scrupulously reserve to himself the one bearing the latest date, which Philip had told her was for Mr. St. John, and read and re-read the volume containing his early tales and poems, with more deep interest and admiration than had ever been bestowed upon them in his time of first success. There were no faults for

Marguerite: she enjoyed the fresh beauty of the style, without perceiving its irregularity, and entered into all the young poet's glowing visions of life, without knowing they were false.

But to Mr. St. John the perusal of Earnscliffe's last work laid open a fresh page of the author's own life. He knew that such exceeding bitterness against one peculiar class of society could not flow from the pen of so young a writer, if it were merely a general principle; and felt sure, from his own experience of human nature, that some great, personal disappointment gave a latent tone to his writings. But of the true nature of this disappointment he could not even surmise. The idea of Philip being married, of course, never presented itself. Young and handsome, it was not likely he should already have made shipwreck in love; and his literary career appeared to have been successful. So Mr. St. John, who was naturally somewhat apathetic about the concerns of others, simply conjectured that his guest had passed through some one of the great trials of life, and troubled himself no further on the subject.

When Philip returned, his host's true and measured criticism upon his works, and Marguerite's undisguised admiration of them, afforded him more real pleasure than any incense to his author's vanity which he had yet received.

He remained some days at the manoir, then made another more distant excursion; and in this manner two or three months passed quickly by. Mr. St. John and his daughter grew accustomed to his frequent absence, but they always awaited his return with renewed pleasure. Philip Earnscliffe was becoming a part of their existence—hitherto so barren in events—and they neither of them would even speak of the inevitable time when he should leave Brittany, and they return to their old monotonous life. An intellectual companion had roused Mr. St. John from his habitua melancholy, and given him once more an interest in the things he had cared for in other days; while Marguerite—poor little Marguerite!—every week made her feel the more that her whole earth was now concentrated into Philip's presence.

All this time he had guarded himself well. Constantly associating with Marguerite, watching all the dawnings of her young mind, reading but too truly the varying colour of her cheeks, and in the full possession already of her every thought (that first soul-possession which mocks at all other, and to which no future rival can attain), he had yet breathed no syllable of his own fast deepening passion; he had said no word that she might not have listened to from a brother—nothing which her father might not have heard. That one kiss, whose recollection yet thrilled through him a hundred times in the day, had been the first and last;—if he took her hand, his own pressure was grave and calm; and Earnscliffe thought that he was in all things acting like a man of honour.

But the hour of awakening from this dream of self reliance was very near.

* * * *

"I think you should take Mr. Earnscliffe to the grotto of Morgane, Marguerite," said Mr. St. John one evening to his daughter. "There is searcely anything more curious in the

neighbourhood, and indeed in Brittany. Do you think it would be too far for you in this hot weather? If so, Bruno must act as guide in your place."

Marguerite did not think it would be in the least too far. "They might start early, while it was yet cool, take a basket of provisions with them, and return at sunset, after spending a long day among the caves. She knew the way better than Bruno, and would be able to tell Mr. Earnscliffe all the different legends connected with the place."

Mr. Earnscliffe appearing equally anxious with herself that she, and not Bruno, should be his companion, the expedition was soon planned, and it was settled that on the following Monday they should start by seven o'clock for the distant grotto.

The next day was Sunday, and they went together to church; Manon having heard low mass at an earlier hour, in order to be with Mr. St. John during their absence, for his state was now so uncertain as to make her dread leaving him alone.

It was a great festival of the church, and

the music was more than usually fine. The morning sun streamed through the gothic windows, throwing a thousand richly-coloured gems around the altar ; the freshest flowers stood there, mingling their odours with the voluptuous sweetness of the incense; the notes of the organ stole in soft, prolonged whispers though each dim aisle and distant chapel of the immense cathedral; and when the priest, a tall and dignified-looking man, held aloft the glittering symbol of our salvation, and every head bowed before it in lowly reverence, Philip was carried away by all the poetry of the scene, and sank on his knees upon the pavement.

He felt somewhat ashamed of his enthusiasm, when, on glancing at Marguerite, he saw her calm and unmoved at his side, evidently fully enjoying the music and beauty around her, but with no trace of devotion upon her face.

When they were on their way home he recurred to it, and asked her if the solemnity and grand effect of the service never made her feel half a Catholic. She looked quite surprised.

"Do you not know that I am of my father's religion?" she answered.

"Yes," said Philip; "but it would be only natural if you had a leaning occasionally towards the only faith whose services you have ever heard celebrated."

"But it is not my father's faith," was her reply.

That answer was the key-note to her whole character. Sentiment, reason, religion itself must be derived with her from the person she loved. Hitherto this one person had been her father; and she could not even admit the possibility of temptation to feel otherwise than he had taught. Perfect trust in him was the leading article in her earthly belief, and she was now, unconsciously, extending this faith to Philip!

The following morning was hazy and full of promise, a true summer morning; and by a little after seven they had started for their distant walk. Marguerite was radiant with spirits, but Philip felt less inclined to talk than usual. The perpetual restraint under which he forced himself to act began to chafe him;

and perhaps some internal warning told him that this long, lonely day together, would not be passed through without betraying him into words that nothing could efface; while Marguerite's unconstraint and growing familiarity made his position only the more difficult to maintain.

Nearly their whole road lay by the sea-side. For the first mile they kept on the sands; but then, as the tide was now in, they were obliged to ascend a high cliff intervening between them and the next bay, which at low water might be reached by the rocks. The road was steep; but Marguerite was accustomed to climbing, and, as the sun was not yet hot, they soon reached the summit, where a wide table-land lay spread before them. The scene was monotonous in the extreme, yet still possessing a kind of indefinable harmony which was not without its charm. The rocks festooned with heath in full flower—the mysterious Druid circles of stones—the silence only broken by the hoarse, measured whisper of the waves far beneath—all was in unison; and the sea-breeze—which at this height was

as invigorating as real mountain air—made Marguerite's young blood circulate in her veins with a feeling of actual pleasure. But Philip was still depressed. The view before them was just of that unmarked character which takes its colouring entirely from the tone of spirits in which it is seen, and the immensity, the solitude, the perfect repose, weighed upon him, while they stimulated his companion.

"Look!" she exclaimed, suddenly, touching his hand with her accustomed quick gesture—"A chase!"

He turned and saw, almost immediately behind them, two birds, whose cries had attracted her notice; one, a heron, who was still considerably a-head, and in hot pursuit of her one of the larger kind of hawk.

"Poor bird!" continued Marguerite; "I hope she will escape." And they stood still and watched this natural 'hawking,' which soon became so near a chase as to be considerably exciting.

The hawk gained gradually upon his prey, and was at length so close that they expected each moment to see him strike. He had,

however, missed his aim, or in the ardour of pursuit forgotten his usual wariness, and instead of flying over the heron, and thus securing her at once, he passed about a foot beneath her, receiving at the same instant a vigorous stroke from her long beak, which made him turn over twice or thrice in the air with pain. At first it seemed as though he would descend to the ground; but then, giving a shrill, angry cry of defiance, he rose with redoubled energy to the pursuit. Meantime, the heron had profited by her temporary advantage, and taken a fresh turn towards a distant shelter of fir-wood—hoping this time to save herself by distance, not height. But the hawk saw the manœuvre, and cutting diagonally through the air with the rapidity of an arrow, he almost met her in her downward flight. The heron gave two or three screams of distress, and once again attempted to escape by suddenly rising perpendicularly as she had done at first; her pursuer followed her hotly, and after some seconds, the two birds had become like mere black specks upon the pale sky.

"Will she escape?" cried Marguerite, quite breathless in anxiety for the heron's fate. "Poor bird, did you hear her cry?"

"No," returned Philip; "she will not escape. It is an unequal contest, the weak against the strong, as is usual in this world.

"See—see," Marguerite exclaimed; "the hawk is uppermost now, and listen to her screams!"

As she spoke, a long cry, just audible in its intense agony of distress, was again heard, and both birds began swiftly to descend. The heron now attempted no longer to defend herself; she sank rapidly, only answering to the incessant strokes of the hawk by her screams. Suddenly she folded her wings, and shot downwards like a stone. It was her last feint, but her antagonist did the same; and when she again attempted to take flight, a tremendous blow from his beak finally overcame her. She continued to fall, occasionally turning over in the air, and at the moment that she touched the earth, the hawk pounced down upon her with an exulting shriek, that drowned her last faint cry.

The two spectators had watched the final scene with equal interest, and tears for the heron's death stood in Marguerite's eyes. But there was a singular expression upon Earnscliffe's face.

"The weak against the strong," he repeated, as they resumed their path.

Marguerite little knew that the unequal struggle between the two birds could have awakened any comparison to themselves in his mind.

"I have watched this kind of chase before," she said; "but never saw the weaker bird escape. How could the ladies in olden times, whom I have read about to my father, delight in assisting in such cruel sport?"

"It is an unnatural feeling for your sex," replied Philip. "In ours, the delight of hunting and destroying what is weak is inherent from our cradles. As school-boys we persecute every defenceless creature we come across; as men—"

"Well;" said Marguerite, "why do you hesitate? Surely you were not going to say that all men are cruel! At least I know two

exceptions; my father would not destroy a worm upon the path; and you, Mr. Earnscliffe, I am sure would protect everything weaker than yourself."

The unconscious appeal touched him.

"I believe I would, dear Marguerite;" he answered. "But, at least, I am glad that you extend your favourable opinions of humanity to me."

He looked down into her trusting face, and, impulsive in everything, suddenly determined to tell her at once of his marriage. It was one of his better resolutions, and he gave himself no time to waver.

"Come Marguerite," he continued, "we have still a long day before us; let us rest awhile on the heath under the shelter of yonder group of firs, and converse a little. I have something to tell you, in which, I believe you will take an interest."

They walked on about a hundred yards, to the solitary trees he mentioned—Marguerite's eyes dancing in expectation of the secret she was to hear—and she then seated herself, her head leaning against one of the fir trunks,

while Philip took his place at some distance from her, and with his face averted from his companion.

"Now begin," she cried, "I am sure it is something very interestiug."

"To me, it is," he returned, "although I have no reason for supposing it should be so to others. It is about myself—"

"—That is right," interrupted Marguerite. "Only yesterday I told my father I should like to know all the history of your life, and I even wished him to ask you; but he said you would tell us just as much as you liked, and I ought not to be so curious. Now you will tell me all—and, first, why you are sometimes so sad?"

She turned her large eyes upon him with a look of childish affection, that might again have made him irresolute had he seen their expression; but his own were intently fixed upon the tiny blossoms of the wild thyme at their feet, and with a sort of effort he began—

He told her of his childhood, of his parents' death, of his uncle's kindness, of his school-boy dreams, and tried to linger over all these

early recollections which delayed him, as it were, in his approach to the darker period of his life. Marguerite liked to hear every detail, and when at length he spoke of his first book, and its success, she clasped her hands, and exclaimed with pleasure. He then told her somewhat of his progress in great London; he mentioned Neville and one or two of his other friends, and at last he brought his lips to speak of Lady Clara.

In a second, Marguerite detected that Philip's voice changed, and she looked at him more closely. His face had now its old gloomy expression, and a kind of instinct made her feel that he was approaching a painful era in his own story.

"Was Lady Clara very beautiful?" she asked, timidly.

"She was not beautiful. She was pale and sickly, and rarely smiled."

"Was she young?"

"Older than myself."

"Was she—I mean—did your cousin like you very much?"

Earnscliffe only smiled bitterly at the ques-

tion; and Marguerite was silent. Without knowing why she felt her heart throb painfully, and an odd, stifled sensation at her throat. Had Philip loved his cousin without return?

"Marguerite," he resumed, abruptly, "I can better describe my cousin's character when I have told you the real tie which binds her to me. Lady Clara is my wife."

"Your wife!" she stammered; "your wife—are you married?"

The word died away, and with it all the flush of youth on Marguerite's face. Married—she looked aside over the vast heath—at the grey curlews, which circled round the Druid stones, and the fern leaves waving in the wind, and knew that it was all monotonous and dreary, though the sun shone brighter than ever.

"Yes," he went on with desperate resolution, "I have been married for some years. But my marriage has been misery to me. I have long been parted from my wife; I would give all in this world, yes, my talents, my hope for the future itself, to undo that misera-

ble marriage. The recollection of it is so bitter to me, that on coming abroad I resolved to mention it to none but those already acquainted with my past history, and thus I have deceived you, too. Will you forgive me?"

The sorrow on his face was so real, that she forgot herself, and extended her hand to him.

Earnscliffe pressed it—hesitated, then relinquished it abruptly, and went on with his story.

He told her of his uncle's losses, of the failure of his own literary prospects, lastly of his wife's leaving him; and if he spoke little of his own errors it was out of respectful feeling towards the innocent girl who listened to him; not from any idea of extenuating himself. "I have told you all, Marguerite," were his last words. "Now you must be my judge!"

She looked at him irresolutely for a few moments without speaking; and during that time, her thoughts were painful ones. Then all recollection of herself, or of her own faintly-dawning hopes, died within her. She saw him, forsaken, disappointed in his nearest ties, and remembered him, only.

"Philip," she whispered—she had never called him so before—"They have all left you. Will you let me love you, and be your sister?" And, before he had divined her intention, she took his hand and raised it to her lips.

The reader, (especially if a young lady), must again remember poor Marguerite's perfect ignorance of the world, before judging her too harshly. Of course, had she been properly educated, she would have at once returned home to her father, on discovering that Philip was married, and have felt a fitting amount of indignation at so nearly being led into loving him! But Marguerite knew absolutely nothing of decorum; and she therefore stifled in her own bosom, at once, and with a silent pain, those half-formed visions of the future, which during the last few weeks, had begun to spread their golden vista before her. And, seeing Philip a lonely, and as she understood, forsaken man, she tried to comfort him with the same childish caress, that had so often won a smile from the pale lips of her father.

He withdrew his hand hastily from her touch.

"Have I offended you?" she asked, softly, but with no feeling of shame. "Oh Mr. Earnscliffe! I wish I knew what to say—indeed, I should like to shew how much I feel for you," and again she ventured to touch his hand.

Philip started to his feet.

"But I am married, child! How can I talk to you of love! How can I suffer myself to receive your innocent kindness? Do you not hear that I am married?"

His voice had never sounded so harsh to Marguerite before.

"Yes, sir," she answered, looking timidly up. "But have *I* offended you? Will you not let me be your little sister? I am ignorant and childish, I know; yet you see how my father loves me, and if you ——"

Philip took a few paces upon the turf: then he stopped short, and he was very pale: but for the present the mastery was gained.

"Marguerite," he said, "you are a child. You know nothing of life or human nature; and what you offer is impossible. There can be no talk of brotherly love between a man of

my age and a young girl like yourself. You know not what you say when you ask it. Look upon me as your father's friend—as your own friend, if you will—but nothing else. I could not love you as a brother," he added, bitterly.

She rose to her feet. Not a glimmering of his real meaning had reached her. Her cheeks had never flushed at his words; and, in a saddened voice, she proposed that they should continue their walk. She only felt that he had rejected her affection; and her loving nature, not her pride, was wounded.

"Forgive me for what I have said!" she whispered, after they had walked some distance in silence.

Earnscliffe was only human; and when he looked down into that sweet, beseeching face, is it wonderful that warmer words than he intended, once more found their way to his lips!

CHAPTER IX.

"ARE you not tired, Marguerite?"

"No; I am seldom tired, monsieur."

"You are paler than usual. Take my arm, child; the ascent is steep."

She looked at him, wistfully, as he spoke, and then accepted his offered assistance.

Marguerite could not understand Earnscliffe that day, or interpret his changing mood —at one time so cold and formal, and then warmer than he had ever been to her before. But she thought the recollection of his marriage had, perhaps, made him fitful and capricious, and tried to render her own manner to him more kind than usual. Yet even as she

walked, and strove to speak cheerfully of the objects around, the painful feeling at her heart would return, and unbidden tears start into her eyes. Was it all sympathy for Earnscliffe? Marguerite knew not.

They had soon finished the ascent of the last hill, and were on the summit of the steeps of Morgane—which formed a boldy-jutting promontory of down and cliff—and the sea lay around them on all sides, save that by which they had approached. Blue and silent it lay; only dotted over by the tiny sails of the fisher-boats, or the black rocks, around which there was scarcely sufficient foam to whiten; and the sea-birds skimmed lazily over the quiet world of waters.

"Our path is here," said Marguerite, approaching to the very edge of the cliff; "but I have first a visit to make to my friend the gabarier. That is his house."

She pointed to a rude kind of hut, built into a corner of the rock, about thirty feet beneath them, and so completely of the same grey colour, as at first to be scarcely distinguishable.

The roof was merely a mass of dried sea-weed, kept down by some enormous stones; and the smoke from the peat fire, issuing through more than one aperture, showed that the midday meal of the family was preparing. The gabarier himself sat outside the door on the small platform of projecting earth, which formed the extent of his worldly possessions, employed in mending nets, and watching some four or five half-clad urchins, who were seated on the very edge of a precipice of several hundred feet, kicking their legs in the air, and trying to push each other off, in a manner which in no way discomposed their parent—these being the daily practices of the infant Blaisots, from the time they could walk alone

Marguerite tripped down the steep path which led to the hut, and then suddenly calling, "Père Blaisot!" made the boatman start round with surprise. His harsh features lighted up on seeing Marguerite, who ran to his side and said a few words, which made him turn and uncover to Earnscliffe.

"We are going to visit the caves, père Blaisot. The tide is just right, is it not—and the weather, too?"

"For the tide," replied the gabarier, in his rude patois, "you must just wait an hour and a half. For the weather, you had best not go at all."

"Why?" said Marguerite; "the sky is clear, and the sea without a ripple."

"Nevertheless, there will be a storm before night," was the reply. "I have not lived alone for thirty years among the rocks without getting to understand the signs of the weather. Take the gentilhomme to the grotto if you will; but return quickly, little queen. It will be no evening for such as you to be out."

Marguerite translated his words to Earnscliffe, who only smiled in reply, as he glanced towards the blue horizon, over which there hung not even the faintest shadow of a cloud.

"He does not believe me," said the gabarier, resuming his netting. "Maybe he knows best—night will show."

"Nay, father," said Marguerite; "I believe you are always right in these things; and we will certainly return quickly from the grotto. Meanwhile, will you let one of the children carry our basket for us down the cliff, for we

shall have enough to do, minding our own steps; and, as we have still an hour to spare, we will eat our dinner among the cool rocks, until the tide is down."

"Moser!" called the gabarier—and a sunburnt imp of seven summers disentangled himself from the heap of small humanity which overhung the precipice, and ran up to him. "Where is is your basket, little queen?" he added.

Marguerite gave it into Moser's hands, and his black eyes were already sparkling at the idea of purloining dainties on the way, when the gabarier snatched it himself, with a nod, indicating small belief in the good principles of his son. He then bound the lid strongly to the basket with a piece of fishing-line, and administered a hint to its bearer, that, if he attempted to open it, his granddam should whip him; and the expression which this awful promise awakened on Moser's face showed that the threat was well selected.

"Be off!" cried the boatman; "fly!"

The child seized the basket, and appeared actually to bound across the edge of the cliff.

Earnscliffe could hardly repress an exclamation of horror; but, on approaching cautiously, he descried a kind of goat-track that, from above, seemed absolutely perpendicular, but down which the little rock-imp was already making fast progress.

"Is this our road?" he enquired.

"Yes," said Marguerite, "but it is nothing to what you will find it lower down. This is easy walking. Good bye, père Blaisot; we will be sure to come back before the storm."

The path was certainly not so steep as it had appeared; still, it required steady nerves and a light foot, and the dry weather made it somewhat slippery. Earnscliffe, in his boyhood, had been a fearless climber, and he thought nothing of the descent for himself; but he was astonished at Marguerite's perfect coolness, and the speed at which she turned the abrupt points overhanging the sea. She was so accustomed to these kinds of walks, that it never occurred to her to look for his assistance, and she did not even turn round until they were more than half-way down. Here the path ceased altogether, and they had to de-

scend an abrupt wall of cliff, several feet deep, at whose base was a bed of loose soil leading obliquely down to a perfect débris of broken rocks and stones. She paused.

"This is the worst part and you must help me, Mr. Earnscliffe. I am not quite like the gabarier's children, who can climb up and down the bare granite like little spiders."

Philip swung himself down the rock, and then extended his hands to Marguerite.

"Come," he said, "I will lift you safely."

She was not fearful of danger as he had seen; but for a second she shrunk back, and she felt that her face flushed crimson.

"I—am afraid," she began.

"Nay, child," returned Philip, gravely, "you are safe with me; come!"

She had to kneel before he could reach her waist, then he lifted her quickly to the ledge beside him; but Marguerite thought she felt that strong arm tremble.

"Can you walk along this narrow track alone, if you are so nervous at looking from a height?"

"Oh! I was not afraid of *that*;" she

answered, looking up so artlessly in his face that he could not forbear smiling. Marguerite could never be a woman for more than one minute together.

"You were afraid of me, then?"

"I did not like—I mean to say it would have been better—" But she felt she was again betraying herself; and, without finishing, ran quickly past that he might not see her face.

There were more difficulties to surmount, however, more rocks to descend, and by the time they had reached the shining sands which lay at the base of the cliffs, all recollections of Philip's marriage and the results produced upon both by its disclosure, seemed to be forgotten. They were just on their old friendly terms; and Marguerite's cheeks as bright, or a shade brighter, than when they left Kersaint.

They found Moser seated in the middle of some wet sand, the fierce sun streaming full upon his bare head, while with eager eyes and scent, he vainly attempted to guess at the contents of the basket, through the wicker-work.

"Moser!" cried Marguerite. He sprang up detected, and, doubtless with his grand-dam's bony fingers already crackling in prospective over his ears, began pouring forth a voluminous mixture of tears and gibberish. Marguerite told him, however, he had performed his task well, and opening the basket, gave him some fruit, and then a piece of two sous, which sent him home rejoicing, to display his spoils.

"Now where shall we dine?" she said.

They selected the shady side of a huge rock, where the sands were dry, and near which a trickling stream furnished them with cold, fresh water. Marguerite spread the snowy serviette, of Manon's providing, upon a small, flat rock on the sands, and laid out their pic-nic upon it. And a merry meal they made! They had forgotten knives and forks, of course, and she laughed heartily at Philip's affectation, when he was obliged to eat with his fingers; and they had only one glass between them, and he would always insist upon drinking after her, although she offered each time to get him fresh water from the brook;

and—oh, reader! if you are young, I need not paint this happy two hours to you; if you are not, you must remember at least one such morning of your youth, and not require my description.

"We are just like children," said Marguerite, at length, trying to call up a look of dignity. "Here we are, wasting the whole afternoon, when we have so much to see in the caves; and, besides, we have forgotten the gabarier's storm."

"Of which there are at present few signs," added Earnscliffe. "We are quite happy here, Marguerite. You ought to sing some ballad connected with the scene before I see these wondrous caves—and I am sure they will look better at sunset. I should like to hear your voice first."

She sang to him, and they lingered yet an hour before starting for the grotto. Both seemed to have an instinctive feeling that this was in some manner a farewell to their past life together; everything they said was tinged with the tone we adopt on 'the last day.' They could neither of them have framed this pre-

sentiment into language; but it existed: and never had the presence of both possessed for the other so deep a charm before.

At length they rose, and slowly pursued their way. The caves were on the other side of the creek, but at no great distance from the spot where they had dined; and, after traversing one or two short subterranean passages among the rocks, they again emerged upon the sand opposite the entrance to the principal grotto of Morgane, where they stopped for a few minutes to remark the singular character of the cliffs, among which it lay, before preparing to enter. Huge red pyramids shot up against the pale sky on one side; on the left, slate-coloured reefs of granite, piled one upon another overhung the sea in giddy aerial galleries; while in many parts, the rocks were hollowed out by the action of the waves into gigantic arcades, now filled with swarms of grey curlews, whose incessant cries might have told to more experienced hearers that storm was not far off.

The entrance to the grotto was so low that they were forced to walk for some yards in a stooping posture, and then found themselves in

such complete darkness as to be unable for several minutes to distinguish any object around them. Gradually, however, the obscurity seemed to diminish, and a faint bluish ray stole through the low aperture they had entered, along the shining walls and sandy floor of the cave, until, as the eye at last became accustomed to this half-light, the whole grotto rose before them like some scene in a child's fairy book.

The roof was about forty feet in height, and was completely covered with a glittering vitrification, extending down the sides to the base. Long veins of the deepest red and pale green marbled the dome, and gave a softer beauty to the savage grandeur of this natural palace. In the middle stood one huge rock of rose-coloured granite, rendered smooth as marble by the constant washing of the waves at high water, and at the extreme further end was a bank of bright gold-coloured sand.

Some of this sand Marguerite collected for Manon, who thought it a great ornament to the flower-pots in her windows, and afterwards she began picking up shells—of which a

variety in every shade of colour lay profusely upon the ground—while Philip stood watching the singular beauty of the scene, and thinking how well Marguerite might have personated Undine, in her little white dress, and with her bright hair falling round her shoulders. Again they forgot the time, until a sudden crimson ray fell upon the green rock, just above Marguerite's head, and made Philip exclaim that there must be some opening on this side of the cave, and that it was already sunset.

"And time for us to be going," added Marguerite. "We will just explore this new entrance, and then return at once."

Directed by the streak of sunshine, they were not long in finding another egress, and, after a little climbing, again emerged into the open air.

The altered appearance of the sky struck both of them at once. Had they noticed more closely, they would have observed, even before entering the caves, that a few light mists had arisen over the western horizon. Now the entire sky was covered with

masses of ominous-looking cloud, edged with gold, and of a deep, inky purple, that foreboded coming tempest. The sun shone with a lurid crimson from out the dark bank into which he was just sinking; the air was oppressively heavy; the sea still quiet.

"The storm is coming," said Marguerite. "Blaisot was right, after all."

"Yes," returned Philip. "I scarcely think we shall have time to reach his hut again before it begins. See, there are a few drops already; we had better remain under shelter of the rocks until it is over; it will, probably, not last long."

Philip had not understood the gabarier's warning; and, observing the water still comparatively low, and far away upon the sands, he thought only of shelter for Marguerite during the storm, and did not calculate about the return of the tide. He was unaware of the treacherous circles in which it rises on these shores, often leaving a space of some miles apparently still free, while its victims have, in fact, been long surrounded. So they merely withdrew a few steps under the overhanging rocks, and watched the progress of the storm.

"Are you frightened, Marguerite?" he asked, for she looked pale.

"No, I am with you; I was thinking of my father."

"He will believe us safe at the boatman's cabin by this time. He will not know how we forgot the hour, like children, Marguerite.'

She tried to smile; then drew closer to his side, and said—

"But I know he will be anxious for me; and it will hurt him in his weak, nervous state. How I wish we had not lingered!"

The sun had now completely disappeared beneath the heavy ridges of cloud; and, as Marguerite finished speaking, a sudden flash of lightning almost blinded them. It was closely followed by a long peal of thunder, which echoed and reverberated through the hollows of the rocks, until another and a louder peal succeeded. Those who have not actually witnessed it, can form no conception of the unearthly character of a storm in such a position as that in which they were now placed. The echoes of thunder among high mountains are sublime and grand; but, given back by these

rocks and caverns, they have a weird, terrific sound, like voices from chained demons in the earth, and can scarcely be heard without an unacknowledged dread of the supernatural. Soon the lightning was playing around them in all directions—the rain poured down in torrents —and, the wind having suddenly arisen, the distant waves were seen rising angrily above the sands.

Earnscliffe had still no idea of their perilous position; he merely thought that, should it come to the worst, and the storm had not abated as the tide rose, they would have to walk through the drenching rain to the gabarier's hut. He knew not that every lost moment was bringing them nearer to inevitable destruction.

"Lean on me, dear Marguerite; you are terrified."

"No! Mr. Earnscliffe; I see God everywhere around me; I am not terrified—but for my father."

"The storm may not be so violent at Kersaint; indeed, I think it is abating slightly, even now—the rain is already not so heavy."

"But the waves are higher."

"They will not harm us. As soon as the rain is over, we will get on before the tide rises higher."

"The tide!" repeated Marguerite, slowly and distinctly. "Mr. Earnscliffe, is the tide rising?'

"I should think it was half way in; see, it has surrounded yonder black rock, which seemed a mile from the sea when we first looked out. But we have plenty of time."

"We have not!" cried Marguerite, seizing his hand, while her own grew cold and damp with sudden terror. "The gabarier told me not to remain in the grotto one moment after the tide had turned, and it is already half way in."

"Child, you should have told me sooner," was Philip's calm reply. "God grant it be not yet too late!"

He passed his arm round her slight form, and almost carried her back through the narrow opening of the rock—a few more seconds, and they had crossed the grotto. Then he placed her against the centre rock, and bade

her wait for a minute, while he looked out at the weather.

Earnscliffe had a stout heart, but it quailed before the sight which awaited him. The water was nearly at the mouth of the cave, and had already separated them from the mainland by a broad and increasing channel. Quickly it came on—each terrific wave bearing aloft a crest of whitened foam, and bringing death for them. They were waves no swimmer could have stemmed for many minutes, even had he been unburthened, and Earnscliffe knew that for their rescue his own powers were vain. Unless escape on the other side were possible, certain death was before them.

He returned into the grotto—whose shining roof and spangled floor might so soon be their tomb—and found his companion pale, but perfectly silent. One glance at his face told her all.

"We are surrounded!" she cried. "I hear the waves already."

"We are surrounded, Marguerite," he answered; "but our longest chance of life is

at the point we have quitted. The sea will cover the sand at our feet in a few minutes."

He took her in his arms—she lay cold and still—and carried her quickly back to the distant opening, which was many feet higher than the floor of the grotto; and there, on the rock where they had watched the sunset, he seated himself; Marguerite still clinging to him, and her long hair falling round his neck.

Escape in this direction he had seen at a glance was hopeless. The high, bare rocks, which overhung the shore, were perpendicular, even could they have reached them; but a current through one of the many tunnels at the back of the principal cavern, had already cut off retreat upon this side also; and the smooth granite which rose immediately behind them afforded not even clinging-hold for the sea-weed, which clothed the more distant rocks. Death was approaching them; not slowly, but with each onward surge of the waves—with every fresh gust of the tempest. In another half hour, they must pass through a darker sea than the one before them; in another half hour, they would be in eternity!

They remained silent. Marguerite had gathered from Earnscliffe's face the dread extent of their danger; no sound, however, escaped her lips—she was only deadly pale. But the full colour of life was on Philip's cheek.

It was a moment in which human passion would be supposed to die before the might of infinity around, and the certain approach of destruction; when the soul, paralysed to every other emotion, would be concentrated upon its own fate alone, and forget the tumult of earthly desire which it had experienced a short hour or two before. But with Earnscliffe it was not so. Life held no object for him so dear as the one to whom he was to be united in death; and he felt, with a strange rapture, that he might at length hold her to his heart, and disclose his passion to her without sin. He felt himself already freed from the chain of his marriage; and that, for the half-hour of time which yet remained, the only woman he had ever loved was his. His in a more perfect possession than life could have bestowed—his in her latest breath—in her death agony.

He folded her closer still to his bosom, as

though already preparing for the coming struggle, when the waves should essay to part them; he pressed his lips upon her lips; he poured forth such words of passionate love as no moment in real living life could have wrung from him; he thanked heaven he might die with her.

"Speak to me, beloved, one word—tell me, now when God alone can hear—that, if I had been free you would have loved me."

Even at that moment of approaching death her face flushed more brightly than on the May morning when, full of life, he had seen her among the flowers.

"Oh, Philip! I *have* loved you. I have thought of nothing but you since I have known you; and I am glad to die with you—except for my father," she added.

He did not hear her last words, he only heard that she loved him—that she was glad to be his in death; and his brain turned.

* * * *

The storm raged on, the wind moaned wildly around them, and the thunder rolled unceasingly along the cavern. But the conflict

of human passion in Earnscliffe's bosom was fiercer. With his cheek bent down to her's, and his arms clasped round her as though to still the uneven beatings of her heart, he heard every whisper from her lips among all the tumultuous roar of the hurricane, felt every trembling breath she drew, and counted them greedily, for he knew their number was measured.

The waves drew on. Already he felt their spray upon his forehead. But he only pressed her more closely, and never raised his eyes from her face; when, suddenly, the throbbing of Marguerite's heart seemed to cease; a livid colour gained round her lips, and her hands relaxed in their hold upon his—she had fainted. The mingled conflict of emotions had been more than she could bear; she lay cold and senseless in his arms.

A sudden revulsion came over Earnscliffe. As he looked into her pure marble face, passion left him, and only the nobler part of love remained. He did not even press his lips again upon those helpless ones, which so lately were all resigned to his; he parted back

the hair from her forehead, softly, as a mother might have done for her dying child; and, then, rising to his feet, he held her clasped to his side, and, in that awful moment, prayed God to have mercy upon them both!

Mercy upon their souls only—the time was past for aught else. The next wave washed to Earnscliffe's feet—the next made him stagger slightly—the next, he was already breast-high. He retreated to the very highest attainable point; and there the waters from the interior of the cave were fast whitening through the opening. Another minute, and they and the sea without would be one.

Buffeted upon every side, he yet held his senseless burden aloft, and strove to keep her from destruction to the last; but in vain. Already Marguerite's long hair was floating on the water; and Earnscliffe, carried completely off his feet, was clinging with one hand to the only mass of sea-weed which grew upon the rock above them—the last frail stay which kept them from eternity—when, amidst the surging roar of the waves, a long, shrill cry fell upon his ear.

It might be only the shriek of a curlew, that had lost her shelter; but to Earnscliffe the sound appeared that of a human voice, and it quickened his desperate hold upon the sea-weed, whose slimy, treacherous substance was already gliding from his hand. A wave higher and stronger than those which had preceded, broke over them at this moment, beating Philip against the rock with a force that almost stunned him, and causing him half to relax his hold upon Marguerite. But still, with the undying instinct of self-preservation, his other hand again sought the rock, and attempted to clutch at its surface. This time he failed. Nothing but the smooth polished granite met his grasp; and another wave like the last must inevitably have sealed their doom, when again the cry arose—this time distinct and near—and, through the blinding spray, and the dimness of his own bewildered brain, Earnscliffe descried close beside them a boat containing human figures.

His whole energy returned at the sight. Life, dear life was before him. Still holding Marguerite to his side, with his right arm he

battled against the waves as none but a practised swimmer could have done, striving to keep above water until the rescue reached them. And, though apparently close at hand, it was yet some time before the boat could near the rock, the height and power of the waves being such as to place her almost beyond the control of her crew; and once when they were within an oar's length of Philip, and the cry of triumph had broken from the lips of the gallant boatmen, a wild eddy again carried them back many feet from the fast-sinking forms they had risked their own lives to save. But they had stout hearts and strong arms, these Breton gabariers, and they gained the struggle! Half-senseless, bruised, fainting, Earnscliffe at length felt that a powerful arm had relieved him of his still inanimate burden, and in another second he lay himself in the bottom of the boat.

He knew not how long he remained insensible. When he returned to consciousness he found that they were still at sea; and for some moments the gigantic waves by which they were surrounded, the lightning-flashes

across the lurid sky, and the harsh features of the boatmen, seemed to him only the recollections of some fearful dream, from which he was awakening. But he then became conscious of a soft hand clasped upon his own, of a pale sweet face bending down and gazing into his with breathless anxiety, and all the past returned to his recollection.

Marguerite had quickly recovered from her swoon; and Earnscliffe had so well protected her, by placing himself between her and the rock, that she was scarcely injured, although numbed and faint from cold. When, from the hurried words of the gabarier, she learned how they had been rescued in the very moment of certain destruction, her first thought was of her father, and a fervent thanksgiving to Heaven for her own safety. The second was of Earnscliffe.

Amidst the strange chaos of memory, warm passionate words re-echoed in her heart—words spoken by his lips—and she turned round timidly, expecting still to find him at her side.

He was there, extended lifeless along the

bottom of the boat, his hair lying in dark tangled masses upon his forehead, his lips apart, and livid. Marguerite sank by him in a moment, and—unmindful of the storm which raged around them—unmindful of the presence of the boatmen—she hung over Philip, chafing his hands with her own, and looking down into his face with an agony such as her life had never known before.

She loved him, she believed him dead—what was now her own safety to Marguerite? What would it have mattered to her if the eyes of the whole world had been upon them?

It was then that he returned to consciousness, and through long after-years of separation Marguerite never forgot the rapture of that moment, when the first deep breath of life escaped his lips!

The night drew on apace. By the time they reached the shore they could scarcely see an object around them; and, although the storm had somewhat abated, it was a long and toilsome ascent to the hut of the gabarier. For, drenched and numbed with cold, Marguerite's limbs refused to aid her; and the path was a

difficult one for even those stout men accustomed to live among the rocks, when it had thus to be surmounted in perfect darkness, with the burden of her form in their arms. And Earnscliffe, although his strong frame had already partially recovered from the shock it had sustained, was yet weak and unsteady, and required assistance in all the more perilous turnings of the path.

A bright peat-fire was ready burning in the gabarier's hut. When the storm was first threatening, and he could see from his look-out among the crags that the stranger and Marguerite were yet lingering in the caves, he had despatched Moser to recal them; but the child, frightened at the sounds of thunder, or from mere wilfulness, had returned and hidden himself outside the hut, not daring to tell his father that he had disobeyed him. Nearly two hours afterwards one of his brothers had discovered him there; and the gabarier's rage was fearful when the boy acknowledged that he had never reached the young lady and the Englishman. He swore that as their lives had been sacrificed through his own son, his

should be also risked in attempting to save them; and dashed down the rocks, towards the creek where his boat was moored, with an oath, and a set look upon his face, which made his wife's heart tremble. Her own brother—a neighbouring fisherman—happened to be in the cabin at the time, and she begged him so piteously to follow her husband and help, that he consented to do so—although he, too, had a wife and children dependant for their existence upon him.

As night drew on, and the storm continued, and still they returned not, the suspense of Blaisot's wife became agony. She looked on her five sleeping children, and knew that, if their father perished, they would cry for bread on the morrow; and, in her heart, she could almost have cursed the stranger, whose idle curiosity had been the cause of her husband's peril. But she loved Marguerite, who had used to bring fruit and flowers to a little lame child she had lost—the dearest of her flock; and when she thought of that, and of her kind, familiar ways with them all, she felt Blaisot had only acted rightly. She lit a large

peat-fire, to be in readiness for them, *should* they return, and strove to pray and hope for the best. But every few minutes she would creep from the cabin-door, and make her way through the blinding wind and mist to the edge of the precipice, to listen, or gaze down the dizzy path, lit up by the fitful gleams of lightning. At length, a long shrill whistle, through one of the lulls of the storm, made her heart beat wildly; it was renewed, and she recognized Blaisot's whistle. She flew back to the hut, falling over the children in her happiness; and, by the time the party arrived, the fire was blazing cheerily on the low hearth, and the few woollen clothes and blankets possessed by the fisherman's family were already hanging, warm and dry, for their use.

There was a rude out-house belonging to the cabin; and here Earnscliffe and the two men remained, while Blaisot's wife removed Marguerite's dripping clothes, and wrapped her up warmly in their own woollen garments —with many a kind word of rejoicing at her safety, and apology for the coarseness of the things that the 'little queen' condescended to put on.

She formed a strange picture when Earnscliffe re-entered—her delicate figure swathed in this uncouth gear, seated close to the flickering fire, and her long, wet hair hanging to the ground over her shoulders. Her first thought was for him.

"You must require warmth and rest, too!" she cried. "Let Blaisot take me back to Kersaint: and, when I am gone, you can make yourself comfortable here for the night."

"To Kersaint!" replied Philip. "It is impossible for you to think of leaving shelter again to-night. I will make my way on at once, and tell your father that you are safe."

Marguerite shook her head. "He will believe nothing until he sees me," she said. "I cannot delay another minute while he is in suspense." And turning to Blaisot, she addressed him in Breton.

At first he was irresolute in his replies; but Marguerite implored with such earnestness that the wife quickly came over to her side. She thought of her own agony if one of their hardy imps was missing among the rocks, and felt for the poor invalid father. So Blaisot at length consented to start for Kersaint at once.

"But I am afraid I cannot walk; I am still so weak," Marguerite said.

"I should think not," returned the gabarier. "Wife, bring my two strongest nets."

They were brought, and soon formed into a kind of litter, upon which Marguerite was placed — the two men preparing to carry her between them. Then she turned to Earnscliffe, but with downcast eyes—her manner had quite altered to him now—and bade him good-night.

"I am coming with you," he answered, "I am already warm, and nearly dry; and shall be better for walking."

She did not attempt to argue with him; and after bidding the fisher's wife a kind farewell, they again set out. The storm was now completely over; only an occasional cloud flitted across the deep blue above, and the stars were fast appearing. Already the angry roar of the waves was softening into their usual pleasant voice — already the wet herbage sent a sweet fragrance round, and the night insects were skimming through the air. For in so short a time can Nature forget the wildest

of *her* storms, and return to her own placid smile; while one half-hour of the conflict of human passion, leaves traces on the heart of a man that a lifetime is unable to efface.

They proceeded in silence — Earnscliffe lingering somewhat behind the others, and striving to bring into clearer shape the visions which still thronged bewilderingly upon his brain. At first the recollection of the storm— of the peril—the nearness to eternity—of the rescue of his own life, was dominant. The bravest man who ever lived must feel the horror of sudden destruction when he has escaped it, and then recoils from Death as he had never done when standing with him face to face. And Earnscliffe thanked God that He had not called him amidst the unatoned sins of his youth into His awful presence! But soon other thoughts arose. The passion which had strengthened in the moment of coming death, was only hushed for a short space now; and Earnscliffe reflected long and bitterly upon all into which that day had betrayed him.

He had avowed his marriage, and, after-

wards, his love—his love for Marguerite, a poor ignorant child, who had been committed to his care; he had spoken words to her that no woman's heart could ever forget; he had strained her to his breast, in the strong embrace of death, and, more than all, he had won from her own lips the secret of her love for him: and a cold shadow fell across Earnscliffe at these thoughts. He had tasted of that fruit whose flavour is like no other; he had just entered into that golden land which had been the one longing desire of his life, and now—like a mother who gazes upon the face of the firstborn son she had so yearned for, but to see him die—the hope had become darkness at its moment of consummation.

Marguerite was lost to him for ever!

The future lay before him in its cold, dull reality. To-morrow, he should disclose to her father both his marriage, and his madness in speaking to her of love when a certain death seemed before them (for, as a man of honour, he could not shrink from this—Mr. St. John must know exactly to what extent his child was compromised): another day, and he would

have left Kersaint: another, and Marguerite would be among the things of the past: another, and he would return to his old life, his old pleasures, his old associates, and be again as he was before he knew her. And so on, for life. His thankfulness for his safety was darkened. In the despairing thought that he must lose *her*, he forgot all the other prospects that life still held forth for him; he forgot his unfitness for death; and, with the impatience under disappointment which from his boyhood had characterized him, he clenched his hands together as he walked, and muttered—

"Would God that I had died with her!"

And still the sky grew brighter, the stars more clear, the freshened grass more sweet; and nature seemed to mock his real living anguish with the calmness of her eternally reviving and unconscious beauty.

CHAPTER X.

It had been a fearful evening for Mr. St. John.

Although ignorant of the full peril in which his child was placed, and striving to hope that she and Philip were under shelter at the gabarier's hut, his parental love had yet conjured up ceaseless visions of evil which no reasoning could dispel; and as the night wore on, and still he received no tidings of Marguerite, the suspense grew almost beyond endurance. Powerless to act, or even to learn the worst, the poor invalid could only place himself by the window, watching the progress of the storm, and praying that each burst of thunder might be the last, while his usually pale cheek flushed deeper and deeper

in the fever of anxiety; and his clasped hands became cold and clammy as death.

Manon would fain have consoled him; but her apprehensions were to the full as dark as his own; when she attempted to speak, her voice was thick and choked, and she sat, somewhat apart from her master, holding her crucifix, and praying to all the saints for Marguerite's safety. At length, unable, like Mr. St. John, to bear the uncertainty in quiet anguish, she bethought herself of making preparations for them *when* they should return, lit fires in the bed-rooms, heated water, and even laid out supper in readiness. The action took her from her own thoughts, and she became more hopeful over her employment. But still the father remained in his old place, his face turned towards the darkness without, and his ear strained to detect the earliest sound of his child's arrival.

Suddenly Bello, who throughout the evening had been wandering about the room, occasionally licking his master's hand, and looking up in his face in token of his mute sympathy, gave one of his low joyous barks.

"She is here!" exclaimed Manon, rushing to the door. "Bello would not bark so for a stranger."

Mr. St. John rose to his feet; but he could only walk half across the room—the yet uncertain happiness, the longing to behold her safe, seemed to overpower him, and render his limbs powerless. What if it should not be Marguerite? what if it should be some messenger with dread tidings of his child? In another moment however, he heard her voice calling, "Where is he? Where is he?" Then came the well-known sound of her light footsteps—she was in the room—and he held her in his arms.

Philip held aloof during that rapturous moment of meeting, and the boatman, who had followed to the door of the library to speak to Mr. St. John, drew his hard hand across his eyes as he watched them, and thought that he was well rewarded for perilling his own life. It was some time before either spoke; then Marguerite, in a few hurried words, told her father how they had been surrounded by the tide, how Mr. Earnscliffe had preserved her until

his own strength failed, and how the gabarier had finally succoured them both.

"Where is he?" said Mr. St. John—for the first time remembering anything but her. "Let me thank Mr. Earnscliffe for what he has done."

Philip advanced; his heart reproaching him as he received the thanks of Marguerite's father, and felt the earnest pressure of his hand. Would he press his hand to-morrow?

"But you are still in your wet things," continued Mr. St. John; "Manon must take you at once to your room, where you will find a fire and dry clothes. You, my child, seem better provided for. How did you come by this strange apparel?"

Marguerite told him of their reception by Blaisot's wife; and then Mr. St. John turned to the gabarier, and, shaking his rough hand, thanked him warmly for his services. Neither of the boatmen, however, would receive reward from Marguerite's father. It was part of their Breton character not to be paid for what they had done by a friend. But this scruple did not extend to the stranger, and they left the

house, each enriched with a present from Earnscliffe that would make their households wealthy for the remainder of the year.

Manon insisted upon carrying off her young lady at once to bed; Mr. St. John was so worn out by the excitement and suspense that he had experienced, that he soon retired also; and Earnscliffe felt relieved that, for this evening at least, there was no room for explanation.

Marguerite's manner with him was so completely altered in the last few hours, that he felt it would be impossible for her father to see them together without remarking it. She was constrained—almost distant—but her cheeks flushed, and her eyes fell to the ground if they met his—the very sound of his voice made her change colour. And Earnscliffe felt that the scene among the caves, and her subsequent terror for his life, had deepened all her former love into passion—dawning, indistinct as yet, but which would grow with every hour of further intercourse. Certainly she knew that he was married; but what was that to her—so ignorant of the world and its

opinions—how frail a barrier to stay in its course the master-passion of our nature!

And Mr. St. John would see this, and from Earnscliffe's lips must learn that he was married—that, as a married man, he had declared his love, and, far worse, won the guileless heart of his child!

He took a hasty supper alone, and then retired to rest; but he could not sleep for hours. Worn out though he was by bodily fatigue, the emotions of the mind overcame all inclination for sleep; and he dreaded the morrow, and the disclosures it might bring, more than he had done the waves which threatened him with instant death.

In persons of his temperament, the moral is seldom equal to the physical courage; and the idea of forfeiting for ever the good opinion of Mr. St. John, was a pain to Earnscliffe, of which those who knew him as a mere man of the world could not have conceived the extent. It even outbalanced, for a time, his grief for the approaching parting with Marguerite which he felt was inevitable.

At length, towards morning, he fell into an

uneasy sleep, from which he awoke with a start, when the early sunlight was streaming through the window. He had been dreaming again over the perils of the past day—the booming thunders—the eddying waters; and it seemed to him that, while he escaped himself, he had left Marguerite to perish; and that Mr. St. John, pale and ghastly, now stood beside his bed, demanding his child, and saying, in a hollow tone—'You have lost her—lost her—body and soul!"

The cold sweat stood upon his forehead when he awoke; and he rose at once, glad to exchange the dreams of the night for the day realities, painful though they might be. He opened the window, and the sweet air blew softly into the room. Everything out of doors was radiant in dew and sunshine—the sea once more unrippled; and Philip was reminded of that first morning after his arrival at Kersaint, when he had listened to Marguerite's young voice under his window.

But now the tender green had become abounding verdure, and the scarcely open buds were full and gorgeous flowers. Like

the progress of their own love, the changing, uncertain spring had deepened into the glowing maturity of summer.

After he had dressed, he remained long standing at the open window, and deep in thought, when suddenly a fluttering knock came at the bed-room door. Somewhat startled, he went to open it, and saw Marguerite, in a white morning wrapper, and her face extremely pale. He knew that her father was worse.

"He is very ill," she said, with trembling lips. "He has had a violent fit of coughing, and broken a blood-vessel. What am I to do?"

Philip followed her without speaking a word, and at the door of Mr. St. John's room they were met by Manon. Her features had an awe-struck expression, but still she had not lost her presence of mind.

"Will you start immediately for N——, monsieur," she whispered to Philip, "and enquire for Doctor Thibault? Bruno is not here, or I should have sent him at once—and

make the doctor return with you, there is not a moment to lose!"

"When was he taken ill?"

"Half-an-hour ago the bell leading into my room was rung suddenly, and on coming to my master, I found him speechless, and his pillows deluged with blood. It was the excitement of yesterday."

Philip glanced through the open door, and saw Mr. St. John, livid and exhausted, supported upon pillows, with his eyes closed; and Marguerite, who was again at his side, wiping the dark streaks tenderly from his lips, her face perfectly white, and her large eyes dilated with terror. He started, almost with a feeling of guilt, at the sight; and, after some more minute directions from Manon, stole quietly down stairs, and was soon in the open air, on his way to N——. He forgot the weakness of his own still exhausted frame and stiffened limbs, in his self-accusing wish to be of service to the man whom he thought that he had injured; and in a wonderfully short time had reached the town, and found out Doctor Thibault's house.

The doctor had attended Mr. St. John during the preceding autumn, and he listened to Philip's account of the present seizure with an expression of grave concern—then he shook his head.

"Surely you do not mean that there is no hope?" Philip exclaimed hastily.

"I cannot, of course, pronounce till I have seen him; but I have little hope myself. He is too feeble to bear up against any loss of blood; and, from your account, one of the larger vessels must be ruptured. I have long known that any sudden emotion might be fatal to him in his precarious state."

The doctor prepared some medicines, and started at once on his pony for Kersaint, leaving Philip to follow on foot. He ran the greater part of the distance; and, when he reached the manoir, Thibault was still in the sick room, and Marguerite—too agonized for tears—was crouching outside her father's door, waiting to hear his verdict as he came out.

She looked up at Philip when she heard his step, but her expression did not change. He took her hand, and the cold, relaxed fingers lay lifeless in his own. This new, great sor-

row had swallowed up every other feeling, and now that her father was in danger, he seemed again as entirely her whole world as in the time before she ever knew Philip Earnscliffe. The minutes dragged on like hours while they waited thus. At length there was a subdued movement in the sick chamber, and then the doctor noiselessly opened the door and came out. In his solemn face Earnscliffe read all—Mr. St. John was dying.

Marguerite sprang to her feet, and seized the doctor's hands, but she could not speak; something in his expression made the words choke wildly in her throat.

"Tell me," she tried to articulate—"tell me ——"

"My child!" said Thibault, kindly—he, too, had a little daughter—"God is good, and you must pray to him."

She knew his meaning, but strove not to believe it.

"What must I do?" she cried, her speech returning in her terror—"what must I do to save him?—tell me, doctor, and I will bless you, and pray for you all my life. Oh, save him—save him!"

His eyes softened; but he was a plain countryman, and he never adopted the cruel system of saying 'Hope,' when there is no hope.

"My child," he answered, turning away his face, "your father must be kept perfectly quiet, the slightest agitation might terminate his life at once. If you remain with him, you must command your own feelings, and not permit him to speak; give him every two hours a spoonful of the medicine I have left, and keep his chamber as cool as possible. I will return in the afternoon to see how he is going on."

She asked no more questions. She had now something to do for her father—to watch over him, to restrain her own sorrow—and, without a word, she turned away, and re-entered the room.

"Can I speak to you, monsieur?" said Thibault, when she was gone.

Philip led the way down stairs, and they entered the library, whose air of cheerful home comfort seemed like a mockery now. The doctor closed the door softly, seated himself in Mr. St. John's easy-chair, and took a pinch of

snuff. He was a good and kind-hearted man naturally; but he thought it part of his professional duty to keep up a dignified calmness which he did not feel on these occasions.

"Is he dying?" said Philip, abruptly.

"Monsieur!" returned the doctor, startled by his tone, and the strange look in his face.

He repeated the question. Thibault paused.

"Well," he resumed slowly, "I may as well tell you the truth at once. My patient is in the last stage of exhaustion; indeed, I may say, dying. His frame is already debilitated, and he has broken one of the largest vessels of the lungs. All the art in Europe could not save him."

"Will he last long?"

"That is uncertain: I really could not give an exact opinion. These things vary so much. When the blood proceeds from one of the greater arteries, you see, the chances are—"

But Philip rose, and paced impatiently up and down the room, and the doctor was silenced in his intended disquisition.

"What is to become of her?" broke from Earnscliffe, at last, and as though speaking to himself. "Who is to take her?"

All the doctor's silly pomposity vanished in a moment.

"Ah, monsieur!" he cried, "It is I who was going to ask the question. They have no friends here, and all the French relations on the mother's side, I am told, are dead. But as you are a friend, and a compatriot, I thought you would know what relations they had in England; or perhaps monsieur himself is connected with the family?"

Philip did not hear the question. He was now standing at the window—gazing out into the garden, without knowing what he saw. He felt that Marguerite, orphaned and alone, would be thrown as it were upon his protection; and the consciousness of his own weakness made him shrink from the trust.

"Doctor," he said turning round suddenly, "do you believe that Mr. St. John is in *immediate* danger.

"As immediate as a man can be to be alive at all. I do not expect him to live another forty-eight hours—his strength is ebbing fast; and, even if he should have no return of the cough, he will die."

There was another silence; then Earnscliffe resumed—

"You are married, sir, I believe?"

"I am. I have a daughter rather younger than Mademoiselle St. John. Would you think it well for my wife to come over to Kersaint?"

Philip knew enough of Marguerite's nature to feel that she would rather have no stranger to comfort her in her affliction, and replied that 'he had not exactly meant that; but that Doctor Thibault being a married man, he would be able to afford Marguerite the protection she required, until some of her own relations were written to; for himself, he regretted that it would be necessary for him at once to leave Kersaint, as—' here he hesitated, and Doctor Thibault gathered that the young Englishman wished as much as possible to be rid of any responsibility in the matter. And, considering how long he had been a guest of the dying man, the inference did not give the worthy doctor too high an opinion of English gratitude. He little thought the pain his own resolution cost to Earnscliffe.

"Are you acquainted with the address of a cousin of Mr. St. John's in London?" Philip inquired. "They have frequently spoken of him to me, but I have forgotten even his name."

The doctor was also ignorant upon this point; they agreed, however, that Earnscliffe should write a letter at once, saying that Mr. St. John was dying, and urging some of the relations to come over to his daughter immediately, and that he should learn the address from Marguerite later in the day. The doctor having promised to call again in the afternoon, then took his leave.

"A true Englishman!" he soliloquized as he trotted quickly home on his pony. "With his haughty manners, and his cold heart; no more warmed by that girl's loveliness, than if he were an iceberg. He must leave the house, forsooth! in his sanctity of virtue, the moment the father is dead, and hand over the poor child to my respectable protection! Yet there is no lack of fire in his face, either—mais ils sont tous comme celà—ces Anglais—bah!"

Earnscliffe was left alone for some hours. He wrote the letter, and afterwards remained unoccupied, standing at the library window. The actual presence of death had never so weighed upon him before. To meet it in peril and excitement was nothing, compared with this slow, lingering approach to eternity which one inmate of the house was now treading alone. And, besides this, a painful feeling of self-accusation was ever at Earnscliffe's heart, which made him shrink from approaching the dying man. Not the consciousness that he had in some measure been the cause of the previous day's catastrophe—in that he was innocent of intention—but the feeling that he had betrayed a solemn trust; and that to the last he should meet Mr. St. John's eye in an acted character. Slight looks and words were recalled which convinced him that her father had not been unmindful of his preference for Marguerite, nor unwilling that it should be so; and he shuddered at the idea of him dying in the belief that his child might soon have another protector.

"And all this would never have been had I

acted honestly from the commencement!" was Philip's bitter thought.

The hours passed by, and towards noon Marguerite entered the library. She looked quite changed, and her childish face had become like that of a woman; but she was calm, and did not weep.

"How is your father, Marguerite?"

"He is asleep; and Manon wished me to leave him, and take food, that I might be more fit for watching afterwards Have you breakfasted?"

"Oh! do not think of me. I require nothing."

"Manon made some coffee an hour ago; I will bring it to you."

She left the room with the same unnatural composure, and shortly returned with a tray and some breakfast. Philip poured her out a cup of coffee, and she drank it, and then strove to eat; but she could not swallow a morsel.

"You eat," she said. "I am not hungry."

Philip took some coffee, and then resumed his place at the window. Marguerite seated herself on a low footstool, and laid her head

wearily against the arm of her father's chair; still, she never wept—she was only stunned and bewildered as yet—the agony of grief was to come.

"Will you not come to the open window, my poor child? The air will refresh you."

Her lips trembled a little at his expression —it recalled her father—but she only hid her face.

"No; I am better here," she answered.

Then Philip approached, and seated himself beside her.

"I have been writing a letter," he said, gently, "which I should like to send by to-day's post. It is to your father's cousin, telling him of his illness, and asking him to come to you. Will you give me his address?"

An indescribable look of anguish crossed her face at his words. She understood why he had written, and it realized her position to her; already she was being given over to strangers!

"Ah, Mr. Earnscliffe!" she cried, wildly. "Do not write to him; they will take me from Kersaint, where we have always been

together, and I shall not be near him when—when—" he is dead, she would have added; but she could not utter that word. She raised her hand to her heart, where the old sharp pain had arisen, and looked piteously at Earnscliffe. "Do not send it yet; wait another day, until we know all. God is merciful! He cannot leave me so utterly alone. Oh, Mr. Earnscliffe! He *cannot* take my father from me yet! I have no one in the world but him." After a pause, she continued—"I should like to hear all the doctor said to you—his exact opinion—word for word."

With averted face, Earnscliffe tried to break the dread truth. He did not deceive her; he rather strove to soften her grief, and make her weep; and, at length, he succeeded. Speaking of her father, he had dwelt much upon the excellence and beauty of his character, and of his fitness for death; and then added, when she turned away almost impatiently from that terrible word—death—

"But think of his gain, Marguerite—from a life of constant pain and sickness, to the glorious life of eternity, and the joy of again beholding your mother!"

Then her tears were unloosed; and she wept long and passionately, as a child of her age should weep, in natural sorrow.

"I am selfish to grieve so for myself," she said, at length; "but you can never know all that my father has been to me. What love can I ever find like his?—so forgiving to all my faults—so gentle; he has never once been angry with me, in my whole life, and I have often been forgetful of him. Only yesterday—the last day, Mr. Earnscliffe—I was away from him so many hours, and thinking of my own happiness, while his anxiety for me has caused this dreadful illness ——"

She could get no further for her tears; and it was a difficult task for Philip to comfort her, —with so much tenderness in his heart to be obliged to content himself with the usual common-places of condolence! He began speaking again of her relations in England.

"I know my father's wishes," she replied, mournfully. "Last autumn, when he was so ill, he told me I was to live with my cousin, in London. And I have never seen any of them —they will be perfect strangers to me.—I

would much rather remain at Kersaint, alone with Manon in these rooms, where I have spent all my happy life with my father."

"But you will act as *he* thought best, Marguerite?"

"Yes; and, after all, it will not matter much. What will life be anywhere, with no one to love, or to care for me?"

Had she sosoon forgotten her love for Philip? or was there, mingled with her passionate grief for her father, a recollection that *that* too was over—a thing that could never be?

"Think of my life, Marguerite! How few in this world have any to really love them! But you are young, and may form new attachments."

She turned, and looked at him very full.

"Do you believe what you are saying, Mr. Earnscliffe?"

He hesitated. "I did not mean that a parent's place can ever be filled in a child's heart; but there are other ties, even more near!"

"Philip."

"Do not look at me so, child—*I* am nothing

to you. When we separate, it will be for ever, and your only thoughts of me must be pitying ones."

He tried to give his voice a firm tone, but it betrayed him in its soft and quivering accents, and the hand which held hers grew very cold.

"Philip!" she replied, with a grave composure, that constrasted strangely with her usual manner, "you think me a child, you treat me as such, and I know that you misjudge me. You say rightly, that none can ever supply my father's place—none ever will. I may like my relations, but nothing more. Even if—I—had married you"—she brought these words out with difficulty, yet, still with no change of colour—"I should never have forgotten him; and it is not likely now, when I shall be for ever alone in the world. But why should you tell me that all I said to you yesterday was nothing? that I shall easily form new attachments? Mr. Earnscliffe, my father is dying, I speak to you solemnly, and in my great sorrow, and I am not ashamed to say it now—I shall never forget you. It is

not in my nature to love many times, and when I *do* love, it will go with me to my grave. You are married, you have told me that I can be nothing to you, but you have made me love you,—you have made me confess it, and I shall never forget you!"

She neither blushed nor trembled; but spoke all this in a fixed gloomy tone, as though thoroughly convinced of the truth of her own assertion. Philip scarce trusted himself to reply. Even as she reassured him of her love, something in her manner made him feel how entirely they were divided; and the words, 'you have made me love you, you have made me confess it,' sounded like a fresh condemnation to him. By what right had he embittered this fair young life, over which, the hand of God was now laid so heavily? How could he attempt to offer consolation?

"Marguerite, can you forgive me?" he murmured.

"Forgive you?" she answered, gently; "you have done no wrong; like me, you are sorrowful and alone—my poor Philip! It will be my fate, like my mother's, to die

young, and not be very happy in my life—but it is through no fault of yours. And now," she added, rising to her feet, "I will return to my father, I will leave him no more."

"And I?" hesitated Earnscliffe. "Will you not let me be with you in your watching?"

"Oh, yes! you may come towards evening, for Manon then will require a little rest, but now I would rather be alone."

She left him, and an hour or two afterwards the doctor arrived. He found his patient quiet, without pain, and composed, but sinking fast; he showed no inclination to speak; and as long as Marguerite was by him, and her arm round his neck, looked happy.

"He may last till to-morrow," said Thibault to Philip, when he came down again, "not longer. I shall call in very early in the morning, however, but it will be to see the child. I can do no more for him."

Philip told him of Marguerite's wish about the letter; and they agreed that one day's delay could make no difference. She would have no reason for not sending it on the morrow!

"I do not fear any further rupture on the lungs," added the doctor. "So, if he shows a disposition to talk to his child, it need not be checked. Poor little creature! she will hear few words enough from him again in this world."

And Philip wrung the doctor's hand, when he spoke so feelingly of Marguerite, in a manner that made him think he had somewhat misjudged the cold young Englishman that morning.

The day wore away without much change in the sufferer. Towards night, however, he spoke more, and his mind began evidently to wander. His voice was soft and low as ever, his eye calm—but his ideas were becoming confused. At one time he thought he was speaking to his wife—that she was dying, and he watching over her; then he recurred abruptly to his own state—to his anxiety of the previous day—to Marguerite, and who would take her when he was gone?—and then alluded to Earnscliffe, in a manner connected with her, which sent a thrill through the conscious heart of one of the listeners. Manon had gone to rest herself, that she might be better able for

her duties when they were required; and Philip and Marguerite watched together during the early part of the night. She would not leave her father for a minute; she felt no fatigue in her constrained position, and her hand never wearied of lifting the cooling draught to his lips, or wiping the fast-gathering damps upon his forehead. She seemed suddenly to have acquired the strength and composure of a woman. But Philip knew that the last scene would be a different one to this, and trembled for her powers of enduring it.

About two o'clock Mr. St. John fell asleep, and remained so for more than an hour. When he woke the watchers were still in their place; but Manon had returned, and had forced Marguerite to swallow a cup of tea, and change her position, which she had not hitherto done for fear of disturbing her father. The grey light of early morning was already stealing through the closed curtains, giving a ghastly hue to the lamp by the bed side, and revealing the ashy features of the dying man, and those, scarcely more life-like of his child. At the bottom of the bed, perfectly motionless, stood

the old hound. They had vainly attempted to keep him from the room the previous day; but, as he was so still and silent, at length permitted him to remain. His great brown eyes never turned from his master's face for one second; and their expression of wistful sorrow and knowledge of the truth, was almost human in its intensity.

When Mr. St. John woke he seemed quite calm and conscious; and his voice had resumed so much of its old strength that Marguerite's heart beat with a wild hope that he was better. But Manon's face grew more solemn, and she glanced at Philip.

"Still beside me, Marguerite—my little one, you must be worn out!"

"No, father! I am not tired. I was so glad to see you sleep."

"It has restored me, darling. I can tell you all I wish now. Put your arm round me—so. Child—I am leaving you."

"No—no, father! You must not leave me —I have no one but you. Do not leave me in this great world alone, father!"

"Where is Mr. Earnscliffe?"

Philip advanced to the bed, his face bloodless at the thought of what the dying man might say.

"I am here, sir!"

"Give me your hand. Why, it is colder than mine—and clammy. Ah! you feel for my child. I have not known you long; but I am sure that you have a warm heart and high principles. Will you be her friend when I am gone? She is worthy of you."

These words, and the fervent clasp, smote Philip with a sharp pain.

"I will do my best," he faltered—"I will endeavour to perform——"

Mr. St. John smiled faintly. He already thought that Philip loved his daughter; and his deep emotion—his hesitating accents—now confirmed this belief.

"I can die contented," he said, softly—a happy expression stealing over his face. "Now, little one, all I have to say must be to you. Nay," he interrupted himself, as his eye fell upon another weeping figure, "Manon first."

Manon took his weak, out-stretched hand,

and kissed it with the reverence she might have shown to a saint.

"Oh, master! forgive me all my faults," she said through her fast-falling tears.

"You have had none, poor Manon! You were faithful to my Lilla—you have been faithful to her child and to me. God bless you, my friend, and reward you as you deserve!"

Then he turned to Marguerite. She bent down over him, and he spoke in low, loving whispers, so that only she could hear; while Philip turned aside, not to intrude, even by looking, on the last earthly communion of these two beings, who had so long been all in all to each other. At length, a suddon exclamation from Manon made him look round, and he saw a change on Mr. St. John's face. His colour had returned, and his eyes were brighter.

"Draw aside the curtains!" he exclaimed —"open the window, and let me feel the air once more."

Manon obeyed him; and the fresh wind, laden with a thousand early scents, stole in,

while a golden beam from the rising sun fell full across the bed.

"She died at this hour," murmured Mr. St. John; "and I am going to her—God remember thee, my child!"

"Father, do not leave me!" cried Marguerite, as his clasp slightly relaxed, and all the reality of death overwhelmed her. "Father, stay with your little one—father—father!"

But the ear which had never turned from her faintest wish before, was becoming dull, even to her voice; and, though he yet strove to answer, his lips moved only with an inarticulate sound.

"And he dies without the sacraments!" said Manon.

Poor Manon! She knew not that the single ray of God's sunshine brought more of His Presence about the dying man, than all the priests in Christendom could have done.

"Kiss me, darling—once more."

These were his last words. As her lips were still pressed upon his cheek, his eyes brightened strangely—then fixed; and, without another sound, he expired.

Marguerite started back in sudden terror, and looked fearfully round towards her companions—then at her father's face. She seized his hand—it was already cold and damp—the chiselled lips had fallen; and, with a cry—so long—so intense in its anguish, that neither of the hearers ever forgot the sound again—she sank heavily and senseless upon the ground.

CHAPTER XI.

At breakfast, in his own house, in a quiet, dingy street neighbouring on Russell Square, Mr. Danby sat alone at his morning meal—his wife and step-daughter being persons too long accustomed to fashionable life to conform to his early habits.

The room was dark, the furniture old. It was the one room in the house especially dedicated to Mr. Danby, and where no visitors were ever admitted; consequently, it was not thought necessary to introduce any of the light and modern furniture which, during the last few years, had found its way into most of the other rooms, and Mr. Danby rather liked this arrangement than otherwise. Perhaps,

it allowed him occasionally to dream—when glancing at the stiff-backed chairs and horse-hair sofa—that he was still in his former life of tranquil widowhood; while the fanciful patterns and Frenchified ornaments in the drawing-room, perpetually reminded him of his fanciful wife and her Frenchified daughter. However this might be, he always looked upon his breakfast as the happiest meal of the twenty-four hours; and, on the morning in question—about four days after the event described in the last chapter—was eating his toast, and drinking his third cup of tea, with great appearance of repose and cheerfulness. It was a sultry July day. The house, however, being on the shady side of the street, no sun ever found its way into the rooms; so, through the open windows the inmates only partook of the glare from the opposite houses, and the stuffiness common to small London streets during the dog-days.

But Mr. Danby had never lived out of London since his boyhood, and perceived nothing of this. True, when he occasionally went down into the country, and breathed the

fresh air, and looked up to the blue sky, something in his heart made him feel that he liked it all, and might have been happier, had he never left it; but the feeling quickly passed, and he always returned with pleasure to the associates, and habits, and old city faces, for which nothing can compensate a thorough Londoner, as he was. He had been in business the greater part of his life, business of various kinds, and none of which had answered remarkably well, although he had never actually failed. Danby was honest and industrious; but his nature was not one likely to do much in the world. He had neither sufficient courage for speculation, nor clear-sighted prudence enough when it was really required, and—to sum up all—he had been 'unfortunate.' Some one had always stepped in before him, just at the very moment when a fortune was to be made; and if he *did* undertake any larger risks, there was sure to be some unlooked-for depression in the very article he had speculated upon. In short—as all men who have the knack of not getting on, say of themselves—he had been 'unfortunate.'

Mr. St. John was his first cousin on the mother's side, and, as the reader may remember, was induced, about the time of his own marriage, to embark almost the whole of his small capital in one of Danby's larger undertakings. 'It was to make them both rich men, there was no risk whatever, it was unlike all his former speculations'—such were the arguments which persuaded Mr. St. John, who was like a child in business, to give over his money to his cousin. As usual, it turned out 'unfortunately.' There were other persons in the transaction beside Danby, equally unsuccessful, but not equally honest, and at the end of six months, without in the least understanding how — Mr. St. John discovered that he had been swindled out of the whole of his money. He talked faintly at first about taking legal measures for its recovery; but soon abandoned the idea, and finally concluded that it was one of the usual risks of trade, and that poor Gilbert was more to be pitied than himself. As it happened, Danby was not involved to such a very great extent in the speculation—at least

the failure did not ruin him—but the thought of having caused his cousin's poverty remained with him for life, and he could never hear his name mentioned without a certain pang of self-reproach. No ill-feeling towards Danby had rankled for a second in Mr. St. John's heart. They continued at intervals to correspond, and, when his health began to fail, he appointed his cousin in his will as Marguerite's guardian in the event of his own death, and acquainted him at the same time that he had done so.

At that period Danby was still a widower. He had married quite early in life; but his first wife died within a twelvemonth after her marriage; and, for thirty years, the idea of taking to himself a second never occurred to him. When, at length, he had realized sufficient money to live upon in small independence, he left business entirely, and bought a house in Tavistock Street, where he lived comfortably enough, with an old housekeeper to attend upon him, until about two years from the present time, when his good—or some might say his evil—genius threw him in the way of his present wife and her charming daughter.

It was Mr. Danby's practice, every summer, to go down to the sea-side for a few weeks—Margate or Ramsgate being usually his choice, as cheerful and accessible from London—away from which he was never happy for many days together. Just as his housekeeper—one fine August afternoon—was packing her master's portmanteau, in readiness to start for Ramsgate the following morning, one of his friends came in, and, in a fatal hour, persuaded Danby to change his plans, and accompany him to Boulogne. This friend was an old school-mate, and they had entered business about the same time. He had, however, been just as successful as Danby was the reverse, and old Mortimer, the stockbroker, was now looked upon as one of the most fortunate men on 'Change. He was rather younger than Danby, and still in business, although he had long since realized a large fortune.

"Come to Boulong, Danby. There is twice the amusement there than at Ramsgate, and the best prawns I ever ate."

"But I don't know the tongue; I was never among Frenchmen in my life."

"No more you will be now. French isn't spoken at Boulong. The shops are English; the visitors are English; prices are English; and you have all the advantages of living in England, with the variety of being able to say that you are in a foreign country."

So the next morning—attired in that amphibious costume of large-check shooting-coats, short nankeen trousers, dust-coloured shoes, and wide-awake hats, which elderly cockneys deem most congenial to sea-side life—the two friends departed in a Boulogne steamer.

Danby liked the change immensely; and for the first fortnight he and his friend were constantly to be seen, linked arm-in-arm, walking about the sands of a morning, or up and down the pier of an evening—the arrival of the English boats, and looking out for newcomers, forming one of their principal amusements. At the end of this time, however, the stock-broker, much to the regret of both, was recalled to town on business that would involve some delay; and Danby was forced to

remain alone during the three weeks he meant yet to stay abroad.

"And I will just tell you what, Danby," said old Mortimer, as they walked together, late in the evening, on the pier, for the last time,—"You steer clear of the widow when I am gone."

"What widow?" said Danby, innocently.

"Why, Mrs. Burgh, or de Burgh, or whatever she calls herself, of course! She has had her eye on both of us from the day we entered the boarding-house. She first found out I was richest, I suppose—they are the devil for their instinct in that, these widows—but when she saw it wouldn't do, turned her attention to you; and, as sure as we are walking here, they want to get you between them."

"To get me! and what, in heaven's name, do they want to do with me?" replied Danby, aghast.

"Why, to marry you of course! Tut, man! you need not be so unconscious of what widows mean, when they lay themselves out to please men like you and me. Why, you get quite red with pleasure, as it is, when Mrs. Burgh

singles you out to talk to before everyone else at dinner. I believe the girl was after me at first, till she saw I wasn't the kind for them, and that disreputable-looking Italian (who cheats young Greenwood, every evening, at ecarté) began to pay her attention. But the mother is after you—and for herself, too!"

"And I hope she will like me when she gets me!" added poor Danby, with a little dry laugh at the intended pleasantry.

"Now, Danby," rejoined his friend, "don't you go and be such a con—founded idiot (I beg your pardon) as to have anything to do with those women. If a man of your age, or mine, marries at all, he's a fool; but, if I ever *did* commit such an act of insanity—which I never shall—at least, I would have something fresh and tolerably innocent—a farmer's daughter from the country, or some article of that kind—something, at all events, that should know rather less of this wicked world than I do myself. But one of these widows, or their daughters—it's all one—who have been here and there—one time in one capital of Europe, then in another—offered

up and refused in every watering-place in England, or out of it, and carrying on about a dozen such games a season as Miss Georgy is now doing with that moustachioed rascal at the boarding-house— I tell you what, my friend, I would quite as soon, or a good deal sooner, marry one of those fisher-girls who are carrying home their baskets yonder on the beach. One can, at least, feel pretty certain what *their* lives have been hitherto, and I defy mortal man to say as much for the others."

As Mr. Danby had a good memory, and Mrs. De Burgh afterwards became his wife, it is possible that his friend's words recurred to him with more distinctness than was agreeable in future days. However, for the present, he only answered—'He was quite safe from all the widows in creation; but, he must add, he thought Mortimer's strictures unjust regarding Mrs. De Burgh—a woman of good family and reserved manners, and who had always, from her own account, mixed in the *very first* society.'

"Then what's she doing with her daughter in

a Boulong boarding-house?" answered old Mortimer.

He went off early the next morning, and poor Danby was left alone to withstand the attractions of his new friends.

Mrs. De Burgh was the widow of an officer —of Irish police it was believed—but she dropped the particular corps to which he belonged, and only spoke of him as the late Major De Burgh. It was also whispered, that the gallant Irishman, during his life-time, had been known under the name of Bruff, and that his widow, considering that title plebeian, had changed it into Burgh, and subsequently, De Burgh. These were, however, merely malicious whispers, to which so many others were added, as made one think Mrs. De Burgh must, on the whole, be a very injured woman. She was now about five-and-forty, still good-looking, tall, slight, and unmistakeably lady-like; for, whatever else was false, she *was* a woman of decent family herself, and her appearance was refined. She was rather die-away, and considerably affected; but Danby, who was little accustomed to female society, thought her very

elegant, and was quite dazzled at the number of 'Sirs,' and 'Lords,' not to mention a few 'Dukes,' whom she spoke of as intimate acquaintances. A thorough knowledge of the peerage, and an unblushing application of it, is always a characteristic of the class to which Mrs. De Burgh belonged.

Miss De Burgh, commonly called Georgy, was about twenty years younger than her mother, and consequently already at an age at which the first timidity of girlhood may be considered over. She was tall, high-coloured, with hazel eyes, black curls, and white teeth; and was of that style, usually termed by middle-aged half-pays at watering places, 'a doosed fine girl.' Of Georgy's inner woman, it would be more difficult to speak with certainty, than of her black hair and high-colour; a remarkable instability being, indeed, the leading feature of her character. In Switzerland, for instance, she sketched, rode, crossed torrents, climbed mountains, or was fast, to any extent which suited the College men who might be 'reading' at Interlachen. At Heidelburg, the Kron-Prinz von H—— might

have thought her the incarnation of German sentimentality, as she talked of *ewige Liebe* with him under the lindens by moon-light; (Georgy spoke all languages well) and smiled as placidly as a German maiden should, while he smoked in her face. And, if thrown accidentally with English clergymen, she could *à disposition* be high-church, cloth-embroidering, architectural, mediæval, catholic; or low-church, world-abjuring, district-visiting, tract-dispensing, papist-hating. With the very young of the opposite sex she was ordinarily amusing, rather dashing, and not sparing of piquant anecdotes—boys like that style; with the middle aged she was giddy perhaps, but guileless; said the strangest things without knowing it, and, if her mamma reproved her, would show as much childish shame as could well be expected from a young lady of five-and-twenty summers—most of them spent on the continent—and who was perfectly well read in French novels.

With her personal attractions, her mutability of character, and her mother's aristocratic blood, it may seem surprising that this young

creature should still have continued Miss Georgy after nine years of charming womanhood. That it was not her own fault, however, must be admitted; and also that instances are not rare, in which the harder sex remain long untouched by the prospect of matrimonial bliss, so readily and liberally held out to them.

On the present occasion, having soon seen that Mr. Mortimer was a knowing old card—Georgy could be very slang—and no go, she was deep in a flirtation with a handsome, good-for-nothing Italian (brother to one of the first singers in the world, by whom he is allowed a hundred-a-year to live out of England) just to keep her hand in. Young Greenwood, the only other Englishman in the boarding-house, was beneath her game for marriage; and Danby she handed over to Mamma. They believed him richer than he really was; and, as the widow and her daughter were always extremely well dressed and had such high connections, Danby also took it into his head that their means were not small.

He managed to keep very clear of them for

some days after Mortimer left. His friend's words had impressed him unpleasantly, and he had no deliberate intention whatever of committing such folly as a second marriage. He was perfectly comfortable in his snug, old-fashioned way, in Tavistock Street; his housekeeper kept everything in order, and gave him his well-dressed meals at regular hours; he had his friends to dine with him occasionally, and dined with them in return: what more could he want? But '*l'homme propose.*'

Four weeks after the friends parted on the pier, the stock-broker received the following letter:—

"DEAR MORTIMER,

"I should have written to you sooner, but my time has been so taken up since you left that I have not had an hour to myself. Excursions, walks, boating parties, pic-nics, have been making quite a *young man* of me—and an old fool, you would add, at my time of life. Well, the fact is, my friend, Mrs. De Burgh's daughter (you remember Miss Georgy) is naturally fond of these kind of amusements; but her mother, with the *reserve* peculiar to

our countrywomen, does not choose her to enter into them (even under her own chaperonage), unless escorted by some gentleman, in whom she can place *confidence* as more than a mere acquaintance; and this circumstance alone has led me into habits so unlike my usual quiet ones. They (I mean Mrs. and Miss De Burgh) are only waiting here a few days longer, until the arrival of Lord and Lady Windham, their cousins, whom they will accompany to Paris; and about the same time you may expect to see me in London.

"It is already past the time at which I should be dressed for a *donkey expedition* to some distant ruins; so I must conclude.

"And I am ever,

"Dear Mortimer,

"Your faithful friend,

"GILBERT DANBY."

"John Mortimer, Esq."

"Well!" said Mortimer to himself, as he finished the letter, "I did not really think my old friend would have turned out such a beastly idiot—at sixty years of age! 'Re-

serve' — 'confidence' — 'more than mere acquaintance'—faugh! Well, if the man is still to be saved, it shan't be my fault if he marries either of them." And, at considerable inconvenience, Mortimer left town that very afternoon, and arrived at Boulogne by the evening packet.

He walked in high dudgeon up the pier, a garçon, from the hôtel he had always frequented before he tried that —— boarding house, carrying his carpet-bag behind, and when he was about half way up, whom should he see but Danby, with the widow on one arm, and the daughter on the other, looking very red and foolish, and the ladies remarkably cheerful. Danby looked more red and foolish still when he recognized his friend; while the widow simpered, and looked conscious, in a manner that made Mortimer absolutely sick. His manner was none of the pleasantest when they all stopped for greeting.

"Quite an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Mortimer!"

"Quite so, ma'am, to all parties;" and he

glanced at poor Danby, who felt like a detected school-boy.

"I hope you will make a longer stay this time than you did before."

"That all depends upon circumstances. I mean to stop until I take my friend back again with me."

Miss Georgy laughed; and, being in a child-like mood, remarked, "That he might have to escort a larger party than he thought for."

"Indeed, Miss Bruff! Who is to form the addition, if you please?"

Mortimer had heard the story about the change of name; and, being in a vicious temper, threw this in accidentally, as a chance shot that might tell upon some one. Mrs. De Burgh turned red, and clung to Danby's arm, while she whispered, somewhat hysterically, in his ear.

"Mortimer!" said he, deprecatingly.

"Sir!"

"You seem unaware—that is—it might be as well ——" His voice got quite gurgly.

"Sir!" repeated Mortimer, looking straight

before him, in a way not at all calculated to help his friend out.

Several persons had by this time turned round to stare at the irascible-looking, middle-aged gentleman, and the well-known widow and daughter. The garçon rested the back of his hand upon his mouth, and little French boys cried, "My God! Adolphe! regard then the English;" while Danby wished himself fathoms deep in the sea.

"It might be as well," he went on, in a low tone, "to let you know, as my oldest friend, the peculiar and delicate"—Mortimer smiled politely—"circumstances of the case. My happiness may appear to you sudden; but, the fact is, I am in a few days to have the happiness—I would say honour—of becoming—or rather of Mrs. De Burgh becoming—my wife."

Mortimer listened quite quietly to the end.

"Garçong!"

"Yes, sare."

"When does the next boat start for England?"

"De next boat?"

The garçon looked at his watch.

"Tide high in fifty minutes—in one hour, sare."

"Very good. Then carry back my carpet-bag to the landing, and wait until I return; I shall go by her."

"Yes, sare," utterly amazed, although accustomed to Britons. "Will monsieur not step to the hôtel, he has plenty of time?"

"And can look after himself, sir, thank you, which is more than every man of sixty can do."

And he glanced at Danby, who seemed actually sinking with shame; for one or two idlers from the boarding-house had now joined the knot of lookers-on.

"My dear Mortimer, surely you will stay to witness ——"

"I thank you, Danby. The time is gone by when farces interested me, or executions either. I wish you all the happiness you deserve, and your amiable future wife also, not forgetting her youthful daughter—*your* daughter, I should rather say—ha! ha! excuse my

good spirits; and, when the honeymoon is over, if you can spare an hour, I shall be still happy to see you in Portland Place, and hear how you are going on. Pray do not let me detain you; I have just time for a cutlet."

And, with a gay nod, but really boiling over with rage, Mortimer passed on;—leaving the bridegroom-elect in much the same state of feeling as a man who has received the last good wishes of his relations, before being hanged.

However, Danby had fairly done it. His friend returned the same evening to Folkstone; and, in a few days afterwards, the well-born widow became his wife. That he was not long in bitterly regretting his marriage, it is needless to say. What man of sixty ever found his happiness increased by marrying again—especially if his second wife be a widow, with a very grown-up daughter?

The new Mrs. Danby and Georgy were mightily disappointed when they reached London, and saw the old-fashioned, hum-drum style of their future home. Nor was Danby less surprised on discovering the extremely

small means on which these ladies had hitherto contrived to keep up a good appearance. And mutual recriminations ensued.

To overturn all his habits, and sneer at his dowdy friends, and introduce a thousand innovations into his household, were the first endeavours of the ladies. But Danby was no fool in general—although, in one particular instance, he had so egregiously showed himself one—and he would neither give up his house, his friends, nor his economical habits. He would have been as glad—after a few months of step-paternity—as most people to get Georgy married. It would be one less, at all events. But he could not see how this was likely to be effected, by following out the same false, flashy system which had signally failed for ten years already. So he resolutely set his face against balls and parties in his own house; and said—"If Georgy wanted to get a husband, she had much more chance of doing so by stopping decently at home, than by going to Hanover Square balls, and trying to hang on to the disreputable skirts of grand society." For he soon saw how far his wife's acquaint-

ance with titled people was genuine; and that, while the majority of her noble friends were myths, the one or two broken-down lords, doubtful baronets, and tawdry 'Lady Somebodies,' whom she had managed to get acquainted with at foreign watering-places, and hunted up again in London, were people whose character had long since thrown them out of their own rank of life in England.

Danby had now, however, been married for two years, and he had found out—like many wiser men before him—that his greatest chance of peace lay in allowing his womankind, as far as possible, to have their own way. They might go to their parties, and occasionally have their 'réunions' at home—at which he seldom appeared—so long as they kept tolerably within bounds in money; and he dined with his old cronies, and occasionally had them to dine with him in return—generally selecting those days on which Mrs. Danby and her daughter were engaged elsewhere. Mortimer, when his first irritation was over, had become just as friendly as ever; indeed, it rather afforded that old bachelor pleasure

than otherwise, to get Danby by himself to dinner, and listen, with the grim cheerfulness of a friend, to accounts of his domestic happiness. And, as every year made Miss Georgy more alive to the necessity of keeping on good terms with all rich single men, Mortimer usually received a very civil reception in Tavistock Street, in spite of that unpleasant manner of his on the pier at Boulogne.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Danby had just finished his breakfast, as the postman came up to the door; and in another minute he was reading Earnscliffe's letter.

Percy St. John had been his last natural tie in the world, and he was greatly shocked at hearing so unexpectedly of his death. The recollection of their youth, of his cousin's unworldly nature—his ready forgiveness towards himself—the kindly letters he had always written in his varied difficulties—overcame him; and Danby covered his face with his hands, thankful that he received the tidings alone, with no wife or step-daughter to witness his emotion. After a time he took

up the letter again, and read it to the end. "You are his daughter's guardian, and will, doubtless, at once receive her into your care," were the last words.

"Receive her! Yes, poor child, that will I!" said Danby, half aloud. "Would God it were a better home to bring her to. If I had not married again, she would have come like a child to me in my old age—for Percy St. John's daughter must have something of his nature in her—and I could have loved her. Now, she will have Miss Georgy for a companion, and become like her, perhaps! Well! I must hope for the best. I wonder how Mrs. Danby will take it?"

He rose, and paced up and down the room for nearly an hour; old and bitter remembrances thronging fast upon his mind, joined to his musings on the young creature, whom death had just thrown upon his care, and was so deep in thought, that he quite started when the door flew open, and Georgy, not in the neatest of morning costume, entered the room. She considered a dressing-gown, untidy slippers, and hair pinned up tightly on her

temples, quite attention enough for her step-father.

"Morning, pa."

"Good morning, my dear. Is your mamma dressed, do you know?"

"I really could not say," seating herself. "Coffee cold, toast tough; just ring the bell, pa!"

He obeyed mechanically; and as he did so, she saw his face. "Gracious! how pale you are. Are you ill? perhaps you ate too much melon, yesterday. Hot coffee and toast!" to the old servant, who entered. "And are there no rolls?"

"No there ain't, miss," said the housekeeper; "the boy forgot them."

"Stupid wretch!" returned Georgy, glancing fiercely at the old woman, and leaving it doubtful to whom the title was applied. "Everything *is* forgotten in this house! Make some toast, at once." And she stretched back in her chair, and patting her knife up and down on her plate, discontentedly, forgot all about her step-father's pale face.

He continued to walk about the room, with-

out speaking; and after a few minutes Mrs. Danby entered. The greeting between herself and her daughter was not much more affectionate than had been that of the stepfather. Perhaps these ladies expended such a large amount of love upon each other in public, that there was little left for home consumption; certainly the outward tokens of it, like Miss Georgy's cheerfulness, vanished immediately in private life.

"No breakfast ready!" said the lady of the house, peevishly, as she seated herself without even looking at her husband.

"I have ordered some, hours ago." Georgy answered, "but, as usual, the rolls are forgotten, and now I suppose the coffee too, ring the bell again, pa!"

"My dear! Wilkins has not had time to get it ready, besides she does not like to be hurried."

Georgy tossed her head. "When I have servants, they must learn what *I* like," she said.

On another occasion, Danby would have retorted that Georgy must wait until she *had*

servants: however, he wished now to keep them both in good humour, and rang the bell again. Wilkins came up immediately with half-done toast and bad coffee, and remarked, as she placed them on the table, 'she had had no time to get the things better.' It was singular what clear, strong coffee, and hot rolls, always graced the master's early breakfast table, when compared with those which appeared at the late meal of the ladies!

"She is intolerable," said Mrs. Danby, almost before the door was closed. "I shall have some change in the establishment soon."

"There is likely to be one!" interrupted Danby, stopping short, and catching the opening. "I have received a letter this morning telling me of my cousin St. John's death; and, as his young daughter is left my ward, she will for the future find a home with me."

Like all nervous people, when Danby *did* bring out anything with an effort, he spoke quick, and told it abruptly.

"Oh!" exclaimed both ladies. "Has she money!" added the eldest one.

Danby winced. It was the one sore point on his conscience.

"Not much; but I suppose the sale of the old château where they live will realize something. However," he added, firmly, "she will want for nothing while I live."

His wife and her daughter exchanged looks; and Mrs. Danby hated Marguerite on the spot.

"He died quite suddenly," Danby went on, "Poor little child! how desolate she must be in that lonely place."

"Oh! she is only a child, then," cried Georgy; and the vision of a brat of five, who could live in the kitchen with Wilkins, flashed across her.

Danby made one of those elaborate calculations, by which some persons find it easy to arrive at dates; starting with his own age—deducting ten—adding thirty—taking away something else, and finally concluding that Percy's child must be about sixteen. "And, indeed," he continued, "in one of his last letters, poor fellow! he said she was growing up, and was very like her mother. If she is so, and has anything of his features too, she must indeed be lovely; for I have heard that

his wife was a very beautiful woman, and I never saw a more perfect face than Percy's."

There was an ominous pause.

"And you mean this Miss St. John to live with you?" Mrs. Danby resumed.

"Undoubtedly," replied Danby, "her home will be with me, so long as she remains unmarried, and I have a home to offer her."

His face had just the expression it always assumed when his wife tried to persuade him to dismiss his old servant, and she knew that he would be firm.

"It might have been as well to have mentioned all this sooner!" she said, peevishly. "If I had known you were going to have cousins and people coming to live with you——"

"Yes, ma'am?"

"Yes, Mr. Danby, I say it would have been as well to mention these things before you married me."

"I don't suppose it would have made any great difference in your decision, Mrs. Danby." He was roused, at last, at her cold selfishness. "Besides, the question scarcely involves your-

self at all. I intend to take one fatherless girl of sixteen into my house, and to treat her—God help me!—as though she were my own child. You need not trouble yourself about her, unless your own feelings incline you to do so; and the more she keeps quietly at home with me, and the less she goes out into your society the better."

"Very well, sir! I am glad I understand the footing on which she is to be placed," said Mrs. Danby, sharply. "And, as you will love her 'like your own child,' doubtless you will introduce her to your own circle of friends. When does the young person arrive?"

"Her father is not yet buried," Danby returned, quietly, "so I cannot say. Perhaps, you would like to see this letter, Georgy; you are fond of distinguished people," he added, turning to her; for Georgy did not feel at all the same amount of spite as her mother on the subject, and was looking rather amused at the small fight. "After all," she thought, "the girl won't interfere with me, and, as she is half French, can help me in my dress, and keep up my accent!" Danby saw that she

was smiling, and thought he would try to win her over to his side.

"Would you like to have the autograph at the bottom of the letter?"

"Philip Earnscliffe!" exclaimed Georgy, in astonishment; "what, *the* Philip Earnscliffe?"

"I should suppose so; the name is not a common one."

She read the letter greedily.

"Goodness! and how intimate he seems! 'My excellent friend'—'poor little Marguerite!' How on earth did they get to know him?"

She was much too *au fait* of all the scandal of London life, not to be perfectly aware of Philip's private history; and, indeed, had seen him once or twice at the theatre, and thought him 'a dear, interesting creature.'

Miss Georgy looked quite excited.

"I am sure I don't know how they became acquainted," said her step-father; "but I do know that any man of education or genius would be certain to take pleasure in St. John's society."

"And he must be actually staying in the house, ma? Perhaps, he will come over with

her. How much I should like to know him!"

Mrs. Danby felt mollified at the idea of the St. Johns knowing Philip Earnscliffe, though she was too dignified to show it at first. However, she made no more unpleasant speeches for the present, and even condescended to say "she wished the child well, and if they had friends in their own rank of life, of course that made a very great difference."

"I shall not be in time for his funeral," Danby went on, "even if I start to-day. Letters are so long coming from that remote part of France; but I must go over at once for the poor girl."

"Why?" said Mrs. Danby. She had been some time meditating a trip to Brighton for her own health, and foresaw that Danby's journey to Brittany would just swallow up the money she meant to spend on carriages and doctors by the sea-side. "Why at once, Mr. Danby? Indeed, if you cannot be in time for your cousin's funeral, I do not see the object of your going at all. It is not likely Miss St. John would wish to leave the

home where she has always lived, immediately, and she must have some friends in the neighbourhood to take care of her. At all events, you had better write first—express your sorrow, and so on—and take time to think over it. But act as you like. You know how the sea disagrees with you; and, indeed, that a long sea voyage is almost dangerous for you to undertake with your full habit of body. Act for yourself."

The last hint was not thrown out without its effect upon Danby. The sea really disagreed extremely with him, and, if it were at all stormy, made him ill for weeks afterwards; and he had often heard from Mr. St. John how long and rough a passage it generally was from Southampton to St. Malo. So he thought, and wavered, and hesitated, between kindness for his little cousin, and his own dread of sea-sickness, until his wife saw how it would end.

"Think over it, Mr. Danby," she said, mildly—"think over it. Write the letter you know; and then afterwards, if you think it really necessary to go for Miss St. John, and

that the voyage will not hurt you, you can do so."

"Well, it may be better to write, perhaps," said Danby; "it would be different if she had no English friends; but Mr. Earnscliffe appears so really interested in her—"

"Yes," interrupted Georgy. "And why can't Philip Earnscliffe bring her over to England, when she does come? You might propose it, pa; it would be a good introduction to him."

Danby promised to do so; and that afternoon wrote a letter to Earnscliffe, enclosing a few lines to Marguerite. They were kind and simple, and told her that, from henceforth, his home should be hers; and that, as far as possible, he would try to make up to her for her great loss. But Danby said nothing about her coming immediately, neither did he make any allusion to crossing the Channel himself. Mrs. Danby's hints about sea-sickness, and his full habit, had done their work; and, the following week, they all went down to Brighton. Where Miss Georgy made and improved the acquaintance of a very long-coated young Anglican

divine; and Mrs. Danby—who since her marriage had thought it necessary to be an invalid—became a convert to homœopathy, and an extremely soft-handed, black-whiskered apostle of that faith.

CHAPTER XIII.

To all the dreadful minutiæ of death, Marguerite remained, happily, insensible. She was very ill for many days; and when she could once more mention his name, her father was already lying in the cemetery of N——. Although her illness was chiefly the effect of her sudden grief, the excitement, and exposure to cold and wet, on the day among the Morgane caves, had produced actual fever; and for some time the good doctor thought very seriously of her case. Philip, who would otherwise have left the manoir at once, and taken up his quarters at N——, could not find the resolution to do so now that Mar-

guerite was ill, and remained on from day to day—his own pale and altered face bearing token of the suffering through which he passed.

Earnscliffe had had many trials already; disappointment, sense of injustice, wounded pride; but this was his first sorrow. In his nature was a store of deep tenderness that had never yet been called into action, and now, for the first time in his life, he utterly forgot himself in his anxiety for another. He wandered silently about the house; he took no food, except when Manon pressed it upon him; and when Marguerite slept, or during the time that she was insensible to all external objects, he would steal into her room, and watch over her with almost a woman's tenderness, bathe her burning forehead, admit the cool air to her bed, and perform a thousand offices which all Manon's honest love could not have supplied. And Marguerite—unconscious though she was—knew the gentle touch, and received the water or medicine more willingly from Earnscliffe's hand than from the nurse.

One night she was delirious, and in her delirium called upon Philip's name repeatedly. From her lately-acquired habit, what she said was in English; but Manon could still detect the name, and her eyes stole searchingly to Earnscliffe's face as she listened. He could not become paler than he already was; but his lips quivered as he bent over Marguerite, and heard again her innocent love for himself told in the vague, unconscious language of delirium, ever mingled with her father's name and a dull remembrance of her recent loss.

"He loves me, dear father—Philip loves me. I shall be his little wife—no, he is married—that can never be. Lady Clara—he told me all, I must not love him. But then, the storm—the waves—father, I could not help it! death was coming, and I told him. It is over now—it is all over—he has left, and I shall remain with you. I may love *you*, father;" and she tried to raise her hands as though to clasp his neck. "Oh! not so pale —those dark, dark streaks—father, you are leaving me—this is death. The waves—Philip, save him—save us both!" and then the words

came more wildly still, until he could not distinguish what she said.

Worn out by her long watching, Manon at length slept heavily in the large chair by the bed-side; and, throughout the remainder of that night, Philip tended her alone. Again and again had he to listen to words such as those she had just uttered; hear his own name whispered with meek reproaches 'that he had made her love him'—then watch her parched lips writhe in sudden terror, as the recollection of the storm, or of her father's death returned—and vainly strive to calm her incoherent cries for help. In all she had a strange sense of his presence. If for a moment he quitted her side, her face turned beseechingly in the direction whither he moved, and she would extend her helpless hands towards him. It seemed to soothe her when he leant over her and whispered gentle words—although she could not have understood their meaning—and when towards morning, worn out by fever and delirium, she sank to sleep—the sleep which saved her life—Philip's arm supported her, and her flushed face was still upturned to his.

Her long hair had become unloosened during the night, and hung in damp and heavy masses upon her shoulders; one hand lay helplessly on the coverlid of the bed, the other was thrown upwards over the pillow in the childlike attitude of sleep. She looked so pure, so perfectly innocent, as she lay thus, that tears rose into Philip's eyes, more like those of a father for his child than of a lover for his mistress.

He was not a man easily moved to tears; but Marguerite had stolen into the inmost depth of his heart—he loved her as no human being can love but once—and as he bent over her through the silent hours of this night alone; the dim starlight that stole through the open window his only witness—the softest and the best emotions of Earnscliffe's nature were stirred. The sinless child whose head was pillowed upon his breast, seemed to him as a symbol of everything most pure or perfect in this world, and as he bent down over her unconscious face, thoughts returned to him that he had not known for years.

He thought of his early childhood, when he

too was innocent and his young mother had hung lovingly over his little bed; he recalled her sweet face as she kissed him for the night; and thought with a pang, that no pure kiss had ever blessed him since. He remembered her love for his father—how they used to sit together by the evening fire, hand clasped in hand, watching him as he played at their feet—and felt that such a life would to him too have been happiness. "If she had been my wife," he added. And at that moment, Marguerite stirred slightly in her sleep, and murmured 'Philip!'

When she woke, at length, after many hours' deep sleep, the fever had left her. All that now remained, was extreme weakness, and in a few days, she was well enough for Manon to lift her to a couch by the window, where she might breath the fresh air. As yet, she had spoken very little. Her mind was quite clear; and Manon could see that she was fully aware of her father's death, for she never alluded to him, nor to his absence from her room. She was conscious of that, and of everything; but we are so mercifully

organized that our own bodily weakness takes away half the poignancy from sorrow; and as Marguerite, feeble and helpless, lay thinking of her father's death, it was more with a feeling of thankfulness that he had gone to rest, and a wish that she too might follow him, than with anything of grief for his loss.

From the time of her improvement, Philip never entered her room; and on the second day after the fever left her, he departed for N——, where he took up his quarters at the rustic country inn. If Marguerite missed his presence, she made no allusion to him; she asked no questions, she showed no interest when Manon accidentally mentioned his name —every kind of feeling seemed numbed within her. But, about a week after her crisis, on a warm, soft August morning, her nurse had carried her to the couch by the open window, and the sight of the old familiar garden without, and the feeling of the fragrant air, laden with the sounds of birds and insects, brought for the first time a look of life into her wan face.

"Support me higher, Manon, I wish to see

my white rose." It had been her father's favourite rose, from which, every summer morning she brought him a blossom. "How fresh it looks, *they* are not withered. I should like some flowers I think."

"You have some already, ma mie; but you were not well enough to look at them. See—" and Manon brought an exquisite little bouquet, which stood in water upon the table. "All fresh this morning."

A faint flush stole to the pale cheek. "Give them to me. Ah! they are very sweet." She placed them in her bosom. "Manon, are you quite sure that I shall die?"

"Die! Ma mie, ma chérie, why should you talk of dying? You have been very ill, but the fever has left you now; and our good doctor said, this morning, that in a few weeks you will be as blooming as ever."

Marguerite turned away her face, and was silent; but the nurse saw large tears stealing down her cheek, and she let her weep on, for Thibault said it would be good for her to shed tears. After a time, she looked at Manon, and said—

"How worn you are, poor Manon! You look as though you had never slept for weeks. Have you watched and nursed me all alone?"

"Not quite alone, darling. When you were very ill, Monsieur Earnscliffe" (the trembling fingers clasped tighter round her flowers)—"Monsieur Earnscliffe would watch by you too, and during the worst night he never left you. Ce pauvre monsieur! he looks almost as pale as you, ma mie; but, then, he had never much colour."

Marguerite was not pale now. The old bright flush came over her face when she heard that Philip had watched her in her illness; and, looking once more towards the sea, she said, softly, "I am so glad that I shall live."

Poor Manon was delighted at these words, and at her improved looks. Ever since her master's death, she had been in hourly dread that her darling child was to be taken also; and now, in her sudden thankfulness, she almost forgot her late great sorrow.

"You will get strong, my child—quite strong. We will carry you to the terrace, in

a few days, and give you nourishing things, and make you so well and blooming—better even than you were before your illness;" and her honest face was all beaming with happiness. "See," she went on, "there is monsieur on the terrace now. He told me he should remain awhile, when he gave me the flowers for you."

"Remain? where is he then? has he left Kersaint?"

Manon explained that he had gone to N——; but came over every day to enquire for mademoiselle; and then she lifted Marguerite on the couch, so that she could see the terrace. The old soft expression stole into her eyes, as she watched Earnscliffe slowly pacing up and down, and the colour lingered in her face.

"I am well like this, dear Manon. If you have anything to do in the house, you can leave me awhile. I shall be happy alone."

Manon had much to do in her neglected household; and seeing the little invalid so refreshed by the open air, she thought she might safely go down-stairs to her work. She

returned every few minutes, but found Marguerite each time in the same position, and saying "she was not tired yet." In about half-an-hour, however, Earnscliffe finished his walk, and returned slowly towards the house. He did not think of Marguerite being up, and never looked towards her window, little knowing how anxiously her eyes were following him. When he was quite out of sight she called to Manon. "I am weary of sitting up, the air feels so chilly, and the sky is cloudy—take me back to my bed." And when she was placed there, she turned away her face upon the pillow, and did not speak again for hours.

That very morning, while Marguerite watched him, Earnscliffe had taken his final resolution—to see her once more, when she had sufficient strength for the interview, and then quit her for ever. No vain sophistry of staying to console her in her loneliness, led him astray now. Her father had died asking him to be her friend, and, with the acknowledged feelings of both towards the other, the only way of fulfilling this request was to part from her at once. "She is too young for the

wound to be very deep," he thought. Yet, even as he did so, her earnest face rose before him as she said, "I shall never change, I shall never forget you!" and—strange inconsistency of our nature—Earnscliffe felt a thrill of pleasure in disbelieving his own words.

He had told the doctor that he was married, during Marguerite's illness, thinking it right for her that their mutual position should be understood in the neighbourhood; and something that he had either seen or guessed from Philip's manner, made the kind-hearted Frenchman form conclusions not far from the truth; while he fully concurred in the propriety of Earnscliffe's leaving Kersaint. They both agreed that it would be well for Marguerite to remain for several weeks, at least, in her old home, during which time Thibault and his wife could watch over her, before going to her English relations. And, indeed, she was now so weak, that some time would be absolutely needful for her to recover sufficient strength for the journey.

Mr. Danby's letter arrived in due time; and Earnscliffe was not greatly prepossessed by

its tenour. Although the note to Marguerite was kind, there was a constraint about it; and an absence of all expressions of sympathy from the women of the family, which made him augur ill for Marguerite's happiness in her future home. The letter to Earnscliffe himself was plain and business-like. 'Mr. Danby regretted that he could not be in time for his cousin's funeral; and also that circumstances' —he did not mention what these were—'prevented him coming himself for Miss St. John; but that, as soon as she was able to travel, he hoped some of her friends would accompany her to St. Malo, and he would meet her at Southampton.' He then added that, in his unavoidable absence, he should be glad if Mr. Earnscliffe would read his late cousin's will, and make him acquainted with the contents. 'Through an agent in Paris, he should arrange for the sale of the property of Kersaint; and he remained Mr. Earnscliffe's obedient servant.'

Philip flung down the letter upon the table. He formed a worse opinion of its writer than was altogether just; and pictured to himself Marguerite, after her free, unfettered life, and the sole

companionship of one so refined as her father, living in some close London street, and associating with the family of a retired tradesman. For Danby's hand was a clear, round-text; the paper he employed blue letter sheet; —and the appearance of the whole epistle, unlike any Philip had ever received in his life, with the exception of duns or communications from his bookseller. "And I am unable to save her from these people," he thought. "Would God that I were free!"

It was a wish that rose often now to Philip s lips. That wish that daily thrills in so many disappointed breasts with all the guilt of a moral murder, although seldom expressed in so many words. "Mine is no common case!" he would add, in self-extenuation. "Clara's life is misery to herself, and it is the only bar that prevents Marguerite from becoming mine. Oh! the eternity of this hateful chain under which I must writhe—while all that could make life a heaven is thus held out to me in vain. If I hesitate between right and wrong, my temptation is great." Who that was ever tempted has not thought the same?

Marguerite gained strength daily now; and in another week Manon announced to Earnscliffe that she was well enough to see him. The old servant's eyes had not been closed all this time; indeed it was impossible for anyone to have seen Philip under the circumstances that she had done without discovering his feelings towards Marguerite; and, ignorant as yet of his marriage, she fervently hoped that her darling might become his wife, and be spared the misery of having to live among strangers. Of herself she never thought. Of her loneliness—her poverty—when Marguerite should be gone; for she had no relations and had saved but little money; all this was nothing compared to Marguerite's welfare. She had always been so completely treated as one of the family, that she felt herself actually one of its members, not merely a hired servant, whom a death or a marriage could at any time throw upon the world—as was now the case.

"She will see you at once, monsieur—she is looking quite herself this morning."

Philip had shrunk from the interview as

long as was possible. Resolving that it should be the last—he yet had not courage for the actual parting with the only being on earth whom he had ever really loved, and when Manon proposed that he should see the invalid, had each day answered—"that he would rather wait until there was no risk of the excitement harming her." But now he could delay no more. Marguerite herself wished to see him; and as he followed Manon through the long winding passages, Philip's heart throbbed within him, as though he were some boy-lover awaiting his mistress—rather than a man of the world who expected an interview with a girl of sixteen!

"Voilà Monsieur Philippe; ma mie!"

Marguerite was lying on a couch by the open window, dressed in deep mourning, which gave additional whiteness to her complexion; but at Philip's name the blood rushed crimson into her face for a second, then retreated, and she felt her whole frame turn cold.

"Marguerite!"

"Monsieur!"

Manon closed the door and left them, never

doubting that when she returned they would be affianced lovers. There was a moment's silence; then Philip threw himself upon his knees beside her, and kissed her hands.

"You have suffered my child—you are pale and changed."

"Monsieur; he is gone."

"Call me Philip, Marguerite. This is the last time we shall ever meet—you must not be cold with me now."

"The last time! Not—not," she faltered, "the very last. You cannot leave me yet. Think of my utter loneliness without my father," her voice choked. "Philip, think of his last words to you!"

"I have thought of them—day and night since the solemn moment when they were spoken."

"Yet you leave me! And he asked you to be my friend."

Philip released the little fluttering hand he held within his own, and then seated himself by her side.

"Marguerite," he said, gravely, "your words recall to me my own reproach. When

your father spoke to me as he did, he was ignorant of my marriage; he knew only my admiration—my feeling towards you—for that it was impossible for me to conceal; but he knew not the grave dishonour of which I had been guilty in concealing my marriage,"

"Dishonour! Oh, Philip! that is no word for you."

"It expresses my conduct, and is, therefore a fitting one. This dishonour ——"

"No, no," she cried, eagerly. "You had told me of your marriage before—before—"

"Before I spoke to you of love—yes. But I loved you from the first hour that I met you. And, while your innocence, Marguerite, rendered your misplaced love blameless, mine from the beginning was guilty. Nothing can exonerate me to myself, or lessen my own feelings of self-reproach: and the only way—a very poor one—in which I can carry out your father's trust, is that on which I have resolved—to leave you at once and for ever!"

He said all this very fast and resolutely, and Marguerite's eyes filled with heavy tears

as she bent aside her head: then both were silent. Philip dared not trust himself to speak, scarcely to look at the sweet, sad profile turned away from him. A torrent of love was ready to burst from his lips, yet he must restrain it, and remember, now in her hour of desolation, that it was dishonour for him even to think of love; so he sat moodily, his arms folded, and his lips compressed with their sternest expression. At length, Marguerite reached her hand to some flowers Philip had sent her, which stood by her side, and raised them to her lips.

"I shall never care for them again when you are gone."

The mute appeal, the childish submission of her voice, were too much for Earnscliffe. He was on his knees, and his arm around her, in a second.

"Oh, Marguerite! *must* I leave you?"

He looked up at her—his dark eyes softening, and his cheek flushed with all the passion of his impulsive nature; never was his face so dangerously beautiful to Marguerite before.

"It is hard, Philip. I have loved no one

else in the world but my father, who is gone from me, and you. Must we, indeed, part? Think what parting is! Long years of life—cold winter days—sweet, warm summer; but not together! I can hardly bear to think of my life without you; it seems so long and objectless. If"—she glanced at him timidly—"I might be anything else to you—I know that I can never be your wife, but your companion, your friend—I should give no trouble; I would follow you, I would care for you when you were tired of the great world, and you would be glad to return home to your poor little Marguerite—Philip, may I be this?" She laid her hand upon his arm, and leant towards him for his reply, until her soft hair rested upon his cheek.

Had Marguerite been anything but what she was, Earnscliffe would never have passed through this fiery ordeal of temptation—for he was a man, and no faultless one. And, somewhat lax as were his conventional opinions, somewhat undefined his religion, it is doubtful if an abstract idea of right would have prevented him from making Marguerite his, and thus seek-

ing to drown, in the love of her fresh nature, all the past disappointments of his life. But her innocence, her absolute and entire ignorance of the import, even, of her own words, was her shield; and a stronger one with a man like Earnscliffe, than all the barriers with which society attempts to hem in the frail daughters of fashion.

"Marguerite!" he answered, hoarsely, and as though with a strong effort over himself. "Some day, when you are older, you will look back upon this moment and pity me. You know not the torture your own words cause me, you know not—God forbid you ever should!—the temptation through which I am passing. Alone in the world, thirsting for love that I have never found, you offer me yours—yours in all the fullness of your youth and beauty—a very heaven is within my grasp, and I must reject it. And the after-recollection that I have acted with honour, will ill efface the agony of this moment. You love me as you can love, in your childish simplicity, you grieve to part from me; but you cannot understand the bitter sorrow of my breast—the

strength of my love." And burying his face in his hands, Philip sobbed aloud.

Marguerite trembled at this strong emotion. As Philip said she was too young to fathom the nature of his passion; and the sight of that strong, proud man weeping, like a child, filled her with a kind of terror. She turned her face upon the pillow, and waited, cold and silent, until the paroxysm was passed. Then Earnscliffe uncovered his face and rose slowly. He was deadly pale: and his features were set, almost hard, in their expression.

"Marguerite, good-bye."

"Not yet—Philip, I cannot bear it. At least, you will write to me?"

"No. No half measures. You are not to be mine—forget me." His voice was quite stern, as he turned away from her.

"And you leave me in anger."

"In anger! my life—my love."

He caught her in his arms; he pressed her to his breast; he kissed her hair—her brow—her lips; he called her by names, never to be forgotten, until Marguerite's last pulse should beat. Then he tore himself away.

"Philip, I shall die"—every vestige of colour had ebbed from her face, and her small hands were clenched tightly together—"I shall die without you. But, if it is right—if you think it right to leave me—go. Let me hear from you once, let me have one letter of yours, to love and treasure, and I will be content. Promise me that?"

He promised her. Again he held her to his bosom; and she threw her arms around his neck. She told him that she would never love any other but him, that, distant, she would pray for him. She said a hundred things which, from any lips but hers, might yet have made Earnscliffe swerve. Then gently she quitted him.

"Leave me, Philip, I am stronger now—leave me."

He turned, and obeyed her without a word. She saw him leave the room, heard his hasty step as he descended the stairs—then the heavy house-door open and shut after him—heard his step still in the court-yard, then—it grew fainter and fainter, and was gone. And the sickening reality of her desolation overcame her.

"Philip! you have left me."

Had he heard that tone, had he seen the anguish of her young face—the hopeless misery in which she sank back upon the couch, white and cold, and tearless, even then his purpose might have failed him! But Philip returned no more; and that evening, when the twilight gathered over Kersaint, and Marguerite, attended only by her faithful servant, was weeping out her very heart in the same room where Philip left her—he was already far on his way to Paris.

CHAPTER XIV.

Love and its sorrows undoubtedly weigh more lastingly upon women than men. No man ever yet broke his heart for love, although some few may bear the scars of disappointment to their grave. The world—ambition—a thousand channels are open to turn the mind from what, after all, is more a pastime with most men than a serious occupation; and in nine cases out of ten, other loves—lighter ones it may be—spring up to replace the first and pure one. But women, in solitude and tears, hug this kind of grief to their hearts; and, from their lack of any other engrossing pursuit,

think unceasingly upon the forbidden fruit whose taste once changed their life into a paradise, until it becomes even sweeter in recollection than reality. Men may feel as much; but they show it differently. And had Marguerite been able to see Philip, three days after he left her, at a large dinner in Paris, more gay and sparkling than ever, she would certainly have accused him, and unjustly, of forgetting her.

Philip found many bachelor-friends in Paris, on his arrival—young London men, who contrive to form a society of their own there, when all the Paris world is in the country, and he entered into their life with a feverish kind of desire to escape from himself, and his own thoughts. The St. Legers, too, happened to be in Paris at the time; and the idea in itself of being near his wife, was enough to goad him almost to madness, in his present excited mood, and make him the more readily fly to any dissipation for forgetfulness.

Letters from England awaited him. He had given his address at Kersaint to no one; but a host of notes, left at his lodgings in town,

after his hasty departure, with one or two kind letters from old Miles, had been forwarded to the Paris agent of his publisher, as he directed before leaving England. There were a dozen despairing notes from Rose Elmslie, full of regrets that he should have misinterpreted her, and reproaches at his abrupt departure, *et cætera*. But Philip could scarcely read them through, and flung aside the last, without finishing it to the end. Had he done so, a certain tone of sincerity in her hints at some desperate purpose might have struck him; but, after the love of Marguerite St. John, he was in no mood for the sentimentalities of Miss Rose! and even a few kind lines from little Fridoline were thrown, half-read, into the pile of letters, carelessly torn up, which lay on Philip's table the day he left Paris.

For it was in vain he strove to forget Marguerite. Her girlish figure, her sweet loving face rose beside him continually; and, after a weary fortnight of sleepless nights and heavy days, Philip started for Switzerland. Pale, haggard, and out of health, and having offended all his old friends with his querulous moods and odd outbreaks of temper.

He had small zest for travelling, however. His nerves were irritable, and all the little incidents of travel jarred upon them. Usually he detested couriers and servants, and liked to be independent and alone; but now the incessant call upon his attention bored him. The obsequious waiters; the polite landlords; the grim officials; the English who found out his name, and would talk to him in railway carriages: all were intolerable. He actually hated Switzerland (certainly it requires a happy state of mind to be able to enjoy it in September, when every mountain, lake, or glacier, groans under the weight of British feet and Murray's hand books), and not till he had crossed the frontier, and found himself in a secluded mountain spot in the Tyrol, did his temper and spirits rally.

The resting-place he chose was a little hamlet near Meran. It was now the time of early vintage; and in those southern nights, when the purple mountains stood in their clear softness upon the cloudless sky, and the silence so peculiarly solemn among mountains was around, Earnscliffe's thoughts became calmer

than they had been for weeks. The anxiety and excitement he had gone through, during the time of Mr. St. John's death and Marguerite's illness, had physically weakened him; but as the mountain air restored his old elasticity of frame, his mind returned more into its habitual state, until, at length, he was able soberly to reason with himself upon his last and deepest disappointment, and look forward to life from this fresh starting-post. For every real disappointment is an era from whence a man must, in some measure, start anew, either for better or worse.

He knew that he had loved Marguerite as he would never love again—knew that he would never see her, probably never more hear her name. He probed the full extent of the wound; acknowledged that with her had died for ever all his youthful dreams of love; and then, calmly, he looked onward to the future. No prospect was golden to him now. The reality, not the mirage, always rose upon his mind, disenchanting every project ere it was half formed; and life lay spread out before him—long years of life, with genius to

be employed, high endowments to be wrought into action, a place to be taken among men —but all seen in a cold, distinct light, uncoloured by the rose-tints of youthful fancy, unwarmed by any vision of wife or child, or household happiness. Long years, whose illusion had already vanished; and which no future brightness could arise to gild!

If at this time circumstances had thrown Earnscliffe across some decided path of duty, he would, however arduous, have eagerly entered upon it, for the time being. Not from ambition, probably not from principle; but simply from that restless desire to be 'up and doing,' which all who have past through much real disappointment must have experienced. Unfortunately, however, his destiny was still in his own hands, (humanly speaking,) and, after two months more of solitude in the Tyrol, he moved on towards Italy; not exactly wishing for the world again, but having had quite sufficient of his own uninterrupted thoughts.

He lingered among the Italian lakes, still shunning every English person with whom he

came in contact, and spending whole days, and often nights, in an open boat upon the water —alone and silent; but, perhaps, once more happier than he would have chosen to believe. In these autumnal nights, the air heavy with voluptuous odours from orange and myrtle groves on shore, under the rich deep sky of the south—and still with Marguerite in fancy beside him, and her soft hand in his—I am disinclined to think that Mr. Earnscliffe was utterly miserable. His youth was yet too strong within him for beauty, whether human or that of nature, to have lost all its old power. Although his truest love was gone for ever, and the world and ambition were no longer what they had been, his temperament was still a poet's, and too keenly alive to every external enjoyment, for existence to be as really dark as he had pictured it.

At Milan he found a long kind letter from Neville, full of busy projects for their ensuing winter together; and late one December night Philip first saw the spectral dome of St. Peter's loom before him in the starlight.

CHAPTER XV.

But with Marguerite life went differently. She wept for Philip until she could literally weep no more—wept with an intensity of grief unusual in one so young, and rendered more touching by her perfect gentleness and submission of character. The doctor wished to remove her from Kersaint to his own house, for a few weeks, prior to her departure for England; but this she opposed with such earnestness, that he was forced to let her have her own wish and remain.

As the time wore on when she was to leave France, she scarcely spent an hour of the day within doors. Her bodily strength had somewhat returned, and she would sit alone among

the rocks for hours, or wander over the walks she had taken with Philip, and pluck the few autumn flowers she could find to be dried, and carried with her to England. In the evening, Manon made her a bright wood fire in the library, as in old days; and she would remain there for two or three hours—never reading or working, but sitting on her low stool, gazing in the fire, her head resting on the arm of her father's empty chair, with Bello crouching by her side.

Marguerite had written several times to her cousin in reply to his letters; and had begged that her father's books, and the old pictures might not be sold. "The only things I care to keep," she had said. And Danby promised they should be sent after her to England. But she looked upon her father's dog so entirely in the light of a friend, that it never occurred to her that he could be left behind, and had not even mentioned to Danby that she would bring a large deer-hound to his house.

The evening before her departure arrived, and as she sat, tearless and wan, before the fire, thinking drearily of the morrow, and of her long journey alone, poor Bello sud-

denly gave one of his quick, impatient barks, and licked her hand—looking up into her face at the same time, as though to show that he could understand, and sympathize with her sorrow. "Bello," she said, laying her arm round his neck. "I must not forget you. You are the only thing left to me."

"And I, mademoiselle?" exclaimed Manon, who sat watching her with the devouring eager look of a mother about to be parted from her own child. "What will be left to me?"

"My poor Manon! But at least, you will not leave France, you will even remain at Kersaint until—until—the old place is sold, and afterwards you are to live at Jean d'Aubret's cottage, where you will have the bright sea always before you, and even see the roofs of Kersaint in the distance. Oh! you will be better off than me."

"Mademoiselle, you have been too generous, and by your noble father's recollection of me, and with my own savings, I shall be well off, and never require to work again. I am grateful to the *bon Dieu* for his mercy!

"But child, what is this if I am to lose

you? For sixteen years, little one, I have nursed and watched, and not one night or day been without you. Sixteen years—and after to-morrow I shall be alone. I shall never hear your voice—never look upon your face again. Oh, child! I did not think I was to lose you thus. If things had been as I hoped, and—"

"Manon!" interrupted Marguerite, hastily, "I know what you would say; do not give me the pain of hearing it. Speak of nothing but your love for me to-night. God knows I need to be told of it! I am not likely to meet with such love again;" and, going to her side, she laid her head upon Manon's shoulder, and was silent. Her grief seemed now of that dull, heavy nature which cannot admit of the relief of tears.

"It pains you, ma mie," pursued Manon, "that I should speak of—ce mousieur—but I will do so nevertheless. How can I tell that you will never meet him again, or others like him, in his own country? and I choose to warn my darling against such men. I am a poor, rough peasant; I know little of great people, and their ways, and, Heaven be praised! less of

love; but I could not be your father's servant for twenty years without learning what like is the honour of a gentleman—and Monsieur Earnscliffe's was not so."

"Manon, you forget yourself!" interrupted Marguerite, starting to her feet, and drawing up her stately young figure to its full height. "You forget yourself strangely, in presuming to judge of Mr. Earnscliffe or his actions! I knew long ago of — of — that he was married; and, even if he had never mentioned it, how could it have signified to us? None but you, Manon, would have ever indulged in dreams of *my* becoming his wife? He dishonourable! you don't know what you are saying—you speak in your ignorance!"

She turned proudly away; but her heart throbbed painfully while she was speaking. A sudden thought flashed across her that there might be some truth in Manon's words, although she had always disbelieved Philip's self-accusations; and that thought was agony to her! She would rather have been guilty herself than have doubted him.

"Mademoiselle," returned Manon, meekly,

"this is the last evening we shall ever be together, and for the first time in your life you have spoken harshly to me."

"You spoke against *him*, Manon!"

"Why should you care, ma mie, he is married?"

"I know it, you need not remind me so often that I am nothing to him. But that does not prevent me from remembering Mr. Earnscliffe—with—with respect and admiration."

"Ah! mademoiselle, you are very young, forget him."

Marguerite bent her head, and gazed long upon the red embers. She was thinking of the evening when she and Philip stood, side by side, in the fire-light, and she had listened for the first time to that voice, whose slightest sound was afterwards such music to her. She thought of all that had happened since then—the new life that had opened upon her in his love, and her own—her father's death—Philip's departure. All passed before her vaguely and dream-like, but leaving a dull shadow behind each as it passed away, while she gazed in the red embers.

"Forget him!" she repeated, after a long silence, and almost startling Manon with her solemn tone. "Would God I could forget him!"

She reseated herself in her old place, and began speaking of other things. "Manon, while you are here, do not neglect my flowers, and when strangers come to Kersaint, if there is any young girl among them, ask her to care for my white rose-tree. And Manon, be kind to Bruno now, he will have no other friend left, and if I can, I will try to send him some money, poor creature! Tell Bon Affut I am gone, and wish him good-bye for me, and above all, take the Blaisots the presents I have laid aside for them. Say to monsieur le Curé, I had only a few books to send him, but I hope he will never forget me, nor cease to pray for me. And Manon, dear Manon, do not grieve too much for me when I am gone. We may meet again sooner than we expect, and I will write to you as often as I have anything to say, and if I am ever rich," she tried to smile, "you shall come and be my servant."

Manon strove vainly to repress her tears, and speak cheerfully of the future. Ever and

anon a sob choked her utterance, as the reality of the approaching separation forced itself upon her; and at ten o'clock—glad of any excuse for action—she made Marguerite leave the study, and go to rest, reminding her of the early hour at which she must start next morning. Then Manon undressed her, as in old days when she was a little child, and afterwards sat by the bedside, talking to her of her mother, and of long-past times, until, at length, Marguerite's eyes grew heavy, and she slept.

But Manon watched all that night—counted every breath of her child, as she hung over her in her sleep—saw, at length, the cold glimmering of the day that was to divide them; and not until she had kissed Marguerite for the last time in the diligence, and returned again to the solitary manoir, did she give way to her own passionate outburst of sorrow.

* * *

"Est ce que cela vous gêne, monsieur?"

"Mais du tout, mademoiselle!" with a polite smile, as Bello extended his length in the coupé of the diligence, and crushed up the feet of the Frenchman who was Marguerite's travelling companion.

"Du tout! Few things inconvenience *me*." And the speaker—a ferociously-ugly little man—threw himself back in his seat, and began to sing. "You like music, I am sure: you must like it, with your face? Then your voyage will be a pleasant one, for singing is my forte."

His voice was worse than his face; but his utter, his appalling cheerfulness, so to speak, aroused Marguerite in spite of herself. Every small hamlet, every wretched clump of houses that they passed, her companion let down the window.

"Conducteur, how do they call this place? Ah!" evidently not hearing the reply, "very well. How near are we to St. Malo?"

"Half a league nearer than when monsieur inquired last."

"Just so—ah!" (Back in his place again.) "Pardon, mademoiselle! your dog does *not* bite, I believe; just so. 'Le plaisir d' être un soldat.' I never was in the army though, mademoiselle. It is right to tell you that; for my appearance is military, and might mislead. No, I have served my country in an-

other way. Conducteur, hola! where does one breakfast?"

And so on for about two hours, until they stopped before the one hotel of a small, dirty town.

"Mademoiselle does not descend?" as Marguerite declined getting out. "But it is unheard of—impossible—on this raw morning to travel fasting. I implore—I entreat—" But Marguerite was firm; and the little man 'desolated' at her refusal, ran in to breakfast alone. However in a few minutes he returned with some coffee and a roll, "Mademoiselle, I supplicate you to eat."

His ugly face was so earnest that Marguerite took the coffee to please him, and was better for it. The poor child had not been able to touch a morsel before leaving Kersaint, and was actually faint from fasting and all the tears she had shed.

"I am better now," she said, timidly, when they were once more on the road; "the coffee has refreshed me."

"Mademoiselle!" returned the Frenchman, solemnly. "You are young, very young—six-

teen years perhaps; I am forty-two; an immense difference—a lifetime in fact; permit that I give you a counsel. You are doubtless a young person of sensibility, so was I. You have had sorrows already probably, not greater than mine were. You love music, so do I. There is therefore a similarity of disposition—of disposition only; I am fully aware of our external differences, and also of your thoughts at this moment. You probably consider me the most hideous person you ever saw."

"Mais, monsieur!"

"Deny it!"

"Oh, monsieur!"

"Mademoiselle, you shrink from giving me pain, when, in fact, your admission of my ugliness would be the greatest compliment you could pay me. I hate to be like other people, and, as I am not handsome, I am proud of my plainness. It is a distinction, mademoiselle, to be the ugliest man in a society, which I invariably am—a very great distinction." He paused, a little out of breath, then resumed with a sort of jerk, "Ah! my counsel to you, pardon me for wan-

dering from my subject; you did not know I had one, I have though. My counsel to you is this. In all your trials, your sorrows, your disappointments—for even with your youth and beauty, you may have them—eat and drink. When I was young I had a dreadful grief, a grief which went to my heart's core, (you can guess its nature, perhaps,) and at first I really thought I should never get over it. But I happened at that time to be staying in Périgueux, and to that circumstance I owe my very life; for a pâté de Périgueux accidentally taught me one of the greatest secrets of man's existence.

"It happened on the third day after my—bereavement, I may call it—I came down from my room. I was living in an hôtel, the Chêne Vert, at the time pale and haggard; figure to yourself that I had eaten nothing for about sixty hours. I entered the salle à manger with no better intention than to have one cup of café noir, and then go out and put an end to myself. Well, as luck would have it, neither of the garçons were there, or answered to my call; and I was just leaving the room

again, when my eyes fell upon the most lovely little breakfast you ever saw, laid out for one person upon a side-table. I think I see it now, a pâté de Périgueux, a cold capon, and a bottle of Château Margaux. Now, mademoiselle, the devil may have put it into my head, but when I saw it all, although I knew it was for a fat old colonel of dragoons, who came there regularly every morning to breakfast, I resolved to eat it myself. 'As I shall be a corpse by noon-day,' I thought, 'the old fellow cannot call me out.' And with that I sat down, and began.

"Ma foi! I think I taste that pie now. Never, before or since, have I eaten anything so delicious. I finished the whole of it; I eat half the capon, and I drank the wine. Then I looked through the window, and saw the colonel coming along, stroking his beard and clanging his sword as he walked. 'Place aux morts!' I thought 'I shall so soon be dead, that it is only fair a living man should give me his breakfast.' So I jumped up, took my hat, and got out just as my colonel swaggered in, and the waiters all rushed up to show him into the *salle*.

"Well, when I got into the streets, everything seemed changed. The sun was shining on the old cathedral—the people in the market looked happy and cheerful—and by the time I had got to the bridge that was to witness my death, I never felt in better spirits in my life. I went back to the hôtel, where the old colonel was swearing eternal perdition to the insolent scoundrel who had eaten his breakfast, and frankly confessed my delinquency, and that it had saved my life. And, from that day to this, I have always known that eating and drinking is a sovereign remedy against bad spirits or misfortune.

"But, mademoiselle, I have often thought, from the look of his eye, when he heard my explanation, that greedy old beast of a colonel would much sooner I had jumped off the highest bridge in France, than have eaten his breakfast. Such is human nature!"

Marguerite listened, and tried to smile at her companion's stories; but she felt wearied and spiritless. To be alone, and travelling to unknown people, and a new home, was enough in itself to depress her, even had it only been

for a visit; but when continually the thought arose that she had seen Kersaint for the last time, and that strange faces and new scenes were henceforth to be her life, the great tears rose in her eyes, and her wan face became paler and paler. Late in the day, the diligence stopped at St. Brieux for dinner.

"Mademoiselle ne descende pas!" again inquired the waiter, in astonishment, as Marguerite hesitated.

"Certainly!" answered the little man at her side, fiercely. "We both descend."

And Marguerite felt grateful for his protection, as they entered the large room, at which the *table d'hôte* dinner had already commenced, and about twenty bearded faces looked up in visible admiration at her as she came in.

"Bring some hot soup," said her small companion, when they were seated. "Soup is what you want, mademoiselle," he whispered. "Wine would not suit you, and a choking sensation in your throat prevents you from eating solid food. However, as you pay three francs, whether you eat much or little, you can help yourself from the dishes as they come

round, and make over what you don't want to your dog." For Bello, faithful to his old trust of protector, kept close to Marguerite's side, and made angry demonstrations when the waiters tried to turn him out.

"I think I shall have to pay for Bello," said Marguerite. "In the diligence they made me pay a coupé place for him."

"Poor child!" returned the little man, kindly. "When you are en voyage you must not pay everything they demand. Was no one with you when you paid for the dog?"

"Only Manon, and you know she does not understand travelling."

"Manon—oh, yes! I see. Garçon! la carte —Château Margaux—La Rose—St. Julien —that will do. A half bottle—ah!"

Marguerite thought the long dinner would never end, and was astonished at her little companion's powers of reception. Fish, flesh, and fowl, solids and sweets—there was room for all; and when the conducteur of the diligence came in to announce that the horses were ready to start, he even emptied two or three dishes of walnuts and bonbons into his pockets, to amuse himself with on the way.

The shadows soon began to deepen, and in another hour it was night—night!—for the first time, alone and with strangers. Marguerite looked out upon the barren tracts of country through which they were passing, and over which a watery moon occasionally broke forth through the mist, and trembled as the cold autumn wind swept in upon her cheeks. The Frenchman—tired out, at last—slept in his corner. Bello laid motionless at her feet; and only the occasional cracking of the conducteur's whip, as they rattled through some solitary village, broke the monotonous rumbling of the wheels.

Sick and weary, Marguerite laid her head back in the corner of the diligence, and at length, an uncertain and restless slumber overcame her. She was roused by a more vigorous cracking of the whip than usual, and the rattling of the wheels over rough pavement, and looking out, she saw that they were in a town, rolling along narrow ill-lit streets, and rousing up the peaceful inhabitants from their mid-night slumbers. They stopped suddenly before the Hôtel de France, and the Frenchman awoke with a start.

"Sacre Mort! Where are we? Conducteur, are we here?"

"Monsieur, we are here."

"Dieu soit béni! Mademoiselle, we are in St. Malo."

He jumped out with his little sac de nuit—his only luggage, (it is wonderful with how few changes a Frenchman can travel) and then assisted Marguerite to descend. "How many pieces have you?" he enquired. "I will see after your baggage for you."

"Nous ne dechargeons pas le soir," said the conducteur, sleepily—

"But I start early to-morrow by the steamer for England." Marguerite interposed.

"All in time!" returned the man, who was now unharnessing the horses. "Entrez, entrez, mademoiselle."

"I hope it *is* all right," she said, turning to her friend. "Manon told me never to lose sight of my things"

"Do not fear! I will take care of them for you. At what o'clock does the steamer start to-morrow, garçon?" to the half-awakened porter, who, candle in hand, was impatiently

waiting for them to enter. "Cinq heures et demie. Bon! show mademoiselle a sleeping-room. I shall remain in the salle," the little man thought. "It is nearly one, now; and it is not worth paying for a bed for four hours. I can sleep sweetly on a chair."

The garçon showed Marguerite into a great dark room, with an enormous old tapestried bed, that looked as though it had not been slept in for centuries; and setting down the candle on the table, left her without a word. She looked round for a minute, and then, quite worn out with fatigue, sat down in a chair, and burst into tears.

"My last night in France!" she cried aloud. "Oh, father! if yon could see your poor lonely child." Bello at this, thrust his great shaggy head upon her lap, and gave one of his low barks. "Ah, Bello! you are all that is left to me now."

She did not attempt to undress; but laid down on the sofa that stood at the foot of the bed, while Bello crouched himself beside her, and at length, she sank into a sound sweet sleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

"CINQ heures, mademoiselle. Vous n'avez qu'un petit quart d'heure pour le déjeûner."

Marguerite started, and saw a rosy, good-tempered peasant-girl standing by her side.

"Where am I, Manon?" she exclaimed.

"You must not delay, mademoiselle!" called out a discordant voice in the passage; "the steamer starts precisely." The tone recalled to her the events of the past day, and, after hastily bathing her face, and smoothing back her long, uncurled hair, she followed the bonne down stairs; and found her little travelling companion awaiting her in the great vacant salle, where some coffee stood ready on the table.

"Monsieur, I hope you have not risen so early for my sake?"

"Not at all, mademoiselle; in fact, I have not risen at all, for I preferred not going to bed. Take some breakfast, I entreat: if you are a bad sailor it will not make you worse to eat; if you are a good one, it will save you buying it on board, where—as it is an English boat—the coffee will be execrable, and the price enormous."

Marguerite seated herself, but she could eat very little.

"I wonder where my luggage is!" she suggested, timidly.

"Give yourself no trouble: I know," said the Frenchman. "Have you really finished? Then, mademoiselle, we had better start: the tide is low, and you must take a small boat."

Outside the hôtel stood a porter, waiting for them, with all Marguerite's luggage. The day was now just beginning to dawn; but the narrow streets were so dark, she would never have made her way without her guide, who gave her his arm, and assisted her over the rough, dirty pavement. At the harbour, a

crowd of noisy boatmen assailed them, and attempted each to seize some of the luggage; but the little man waved his hand imperiously, and made his way to a better-looking boat than the rest, into which he helped Marguerite, Bello closely following.

The steam was just up when they reached the vessel; and the Frenchman had only time to run up the companion-ladder, and see Marguerite and all her things safely on board, before the bell rang, and it was time for him to return.

"Monsieur, I cannot thank you sufficiently!" Marguerite extended her hand. The little man just touched it,—then bowed profoundly.

"Here is my card, mademoiselle," he replied, producing a very glossy one from his waistcoat-pocket; "and in the vilain pays to which you are going, I shall be too honoured if *my* name is not forgotten in your thoughts —the last Frenchman, remember, to whom you have spoken before your exile ——"

"Going with us, mounseer?" said the English steward, jogging his elbow.

"No, I dank God, sare. I not vis you."

"Well, you must look sharp, then, we're just off."

The Frenchman with much dignity, descended the ladder, and in another minute the steamer was in motion.

Marguerite glanced at the card, on which was written, 'Achille Jules Cesar le Grand. Marchand Tailleur,' and then at the small hero, himself, who was sitting in the boat, watching her. She waved her hand kindly, and was ashamed to feel the tears come into her eyes. "This little tailor, is perhaps, the last person who will show kindness to me," she thought. Just then, another idea flashed across her, she had paid nothing in the hôtel or boat, and of course, Monsieur Achille would be responsible for all, 'and he was too delicate to tell me of it!' she said, as the steamer swept out of the harbour, and he vanished for ever from her sight. 'And only a tailor!'

Her further reflections upon her own forgetfulness were here interrupted by warlike sounds from Bello, who was resenting the attempts of two sailor lads to remove him from Marguerite's side.

"Blow the great ugly brute!" said one, "whoever heard tell of passengers bringing such as you aboard, before?"

"You had better not touch him," interposed Marguerite, in her soft, foreign accent; "he is so fierce to strangers! If this is not the place for him, I will go where you like to take him, and he will follow."

Both lads touched their caps. "We didn't know he belonged to you, miss; there's a regular place for dogs below, but it ain't fit for you to come there." However, Marguerite went with them, and saw Bello safely consigned for the voyage, and then returned to her place.

It was a fresh autumn morning, with a rising wind from the west; and the heavy cross sea soon sent the other passengers below. But to her the roar of the waters, and the cold spray dashing across her face was delightful, and she remained on deck, silently watching the coast of France until it vanished in the hazy distance. At about ten o'clock they reached Jersey, where they had to change into a larger steamer, and this time she was

forced to see herself after the luggage and Bello. No pleasant task for one so young and timid, and with the consciousness that she spoke like a foreigner. However, she managed pretty well; and though no English gentleman came forward to assist, the common sailors were all civil, and touched their hats when they spoke to her. Marguerite was dressed, of course, in the deepest mourning, and, according to the provincial French fashion, a long crape veil nearly reached her feet. But her fresh young face was one that black became; and a certain air of timidity, perfectly distinct from shyness, joined to her graceful and dignified carriage, told even the commonest sailor-boy that, though she was travelling alone, she was unused to it, and was of gentle birth.

There were a great many passengers from Jersey, and some ladies seated themselves beside Marguerite. One of them was young and good-looking, and as the steamer passed along the varied coast of the island, Marguerite said to her gently—

"It is beautiful, this little island, madame!"

The lady stared, and then laughed, and then, with the slightest possible bow, turned away and went on talking to her companions.

"Heavens! are these Englishwomen—can they be compatriots of Philip's?" thought Marguerite. However, this little incident served as a warning to her to speak to no more strangers; and she sat alone and silent the whole remainder of the day, eating only a few biscuits, and declining to go below to the cabin dinner.

It was quite dark when they reached Southampton, and, as she had forgotten to mention the exact day when the steamer sailed, no one was there to meet her, and she had alone to disembark and go to an hotel; where the enormous bill the next morning, made Marguerite blush with shame as she thought of Monsieur Achille, and wondered if he had paid so much for her at St. Malo.

"Four shillings for my supper! I thought I had nothing," she ventured to suggest to the magnificent head-waiter.

"For D's supper, miss. Allow me to refer. Ah! your large dog; two more for his breakfast."

She paid without a word, but hoped, mentally, meat would not be so dear in London as at Southampton, or her cousin would have to pay a good deal for Bello's keep.

"Do you have a commissioner to clear your things, miss? He will bring them to the station, and save you all trouble."

"Oh, if you please."

"And a carriage for yourself?"

"Certainly." And with all these small expenses, together with similar ones in London, Marguerite reached her cousin's house with just sufficient money left in her purse to pay the cab, and very nearly dead with all the fatigue and excitement she had gone through.

Danby met her himself at the door.

"My poor child, you are heartily welcome." The kind tone of voice was a pleasant surprise to Marguerite, who had pictured him to herself as very different; and a brighter expression came in her face, as she followed him upstairs to the drawing-room. "If you had told me what day you were coming, my dear, I should have met you at Southampton."

"Oh! thank you, sir. I should indeed have been glad to see you on my arrival, I felt so lonely travelling by myself."

Danby opened the drawing-room door; and, entering, Marguerite saw her future companions, Mrs. Danby and Georgy, both seated together on the sofa, and looking frigid and stately.

The room was not a large one; the windows were hung with rose-lined muslin curtains and gilded scrolls, and a rose-coloured silk *portière* replaced the old-fashioned folding-doors, communicating with the small back drawing-room (which, when the stained-glass window was open, overlooked the Tavistock Mews); endless trinkets, and gew-gaws, and gaily bound books adorned the table; Chinese monsters, of doubtful antiquity, stood on bracquets in the corners: a score of family miniatures (most of them picked up in Hanway Street) hung on each side of the mantelpiece; water-colour drawings of Miss Georgy's graced the walls. But, in a moment, Marguerite detected the flimsy, bad taste of the room, and saw that neither fresh flowers, nor

well-read books, nor signs of occupation, gave it the look of home. She glanced at the De Burghs, and knew they were neither of them prepared to like her.

"Here is little Marguerite," said Danby, rather nervously. "Mrs. Danby, my dear! your new cousin."

Mrs. Danby extended three languid fingers to her 'new cousin,' and the expression of Georgy's face betokened anything but a hearty welcome. She had troubled herself very slightly about Marguerite, as soon as she found that Earnscliffe would not accompany her, and only expected to see an awkward country-girl of sixteen, who would not be much in her own way, and probably some day go out as a governess; and when Marguerite entered in all her flush of striking beauty, and with as much grace of manner as though she had been accustomed to good society from her cradle, the surprise was by no means agreeable. She did not want a lovely girl, ten years younger than herself, to attract away the attention of the few men they managed to get at the house, and at once foresaw a desperate rival in Marguerite.

"How do you do, Miss St. John? You must excuse my surprise; but, from your letters, we expected quite a little girl."

"Ah!" returned Marguerite, in her rich, sonorous voice and foreign accent; "I express my English so ill, no doubt you thought my letter childish; but I am, indeed, sixteen—sixteen and a few days."

"You look very much older."

"Yes? Oh! I do not look at all old without my bonnet."

"You have your father's eyes, child!" said Danby, very kindly.

The little speech went to Marguerite's heart; and she turned and kissed the old man's cheek: "Oh, cousin! he so often spoke of you," she whispered, while the ready tears gathered in her eyes.

Mrs. Danby tossed her head, and Georgy said something about scenes. Marguerite looked very calmly from one to the other. She knew intuitively they did not like her, and drew nearer to Danby, as to her only friend.

"You must be very tired, dear," he went on, "after your long journey. Dinner will

be ready in about an hour. Georgy, take your cousin to her room."

Very slowly, Miss Georgy rose; and she was leisurely approaching Marguerite when the door burst open, and in flew Bello, nearly upsetting two great china jars as he entered, and leaving marks of his muddy feet upon the carpet. Danby was singularly timid with dogs —it amounted almost to a peculiarity with him—and he exclaimed as loud as the two women at the intruder.

"Poor Bello!" said Marguerite, quietly. "It is all so strange to him! but he will soon get used to you."

"Miss St. John!" exclaimed Mrs. Danby, actually rising from the sofa with outraged dignity. "You do not mean that that monster is yours?"

"Undoubtedly he is, madame."

"And you have brought him with you to this house?"

"I have."

"My dear," interrupted Danby, "there must be some mistake! You cannot mean that you wish that—very—large hound to become my guest?"

"Cousin, he was my father's favourite—his constant companion."

"Oh! was he? Ah, poor Percy! Well, we will see."

Danby fidgetted about, and winced as Bello glared savagely at him and showed his teeth.

"But, to tell the truth," he went on, more resolutely, "I am not fond of dogs."

"Not fond of dogs? Oh! sir, you must like Bello. When once he knows you well, he will be so faithful! It is his very sagacity that prevents him taking to strangers."

"Yes, exactly; but in the mean time ——"

"In the meantime," interrupted Mrs. Danby, "you will recollect, Miss St. John, I don't allow such creatures in my drawing-room. What your cousin chooses you to do in his own sitting-room, I know not!"

"Perhaps, Jenkins likes dogs," hesitated poor Danby.

"Perhaps something temporary might be arranged in the coal-hole!" cried Miss Georgy, wittily.

Marguerite looked from one to the other of the speakers, her dark eyes dilating, and her

lips parted. She really scarcely understood them at first. That anyone professing regard for her father should hesitate at the slight inconvenience of receiving his dog, was something she could not believe; but at Miss Georgy's remark, and the sneer accompanying it, her cheek flushed crimson.

"Am I to have a room to myself?" she said, turning to Danby.

"Of course—of course, my dear, and—"

"Then, please may Bello come with me? He shall trouble no one else."

"That brute in one of the bed rooms!" said Mrs. Danby.

"Oh, madame! would you turn him into the streets? He is old, and will not live very long, and he is all remaining to me of my home."

Mrs. Danby turned away coldly from the supplicating young face, and addressed her husband.

"Just settle all this as you like, Mr. Danby; but spare me any more scenes with this young person, for the future. I am not in a state to bear these shocks on my nerves;

and, as it is I shall be ill and unstrung for the rest of the day. And, Mr. Danby, sir" (her voice became prophetically shrill), "turn out that creature—that monster, and take away —the young person—I am fainting;" and this excellent woman sank back, in approaching hysterics, on the sofa.

So Danby himself showed Marguerite to her room—a very small one, overlooking extensive ranges of chimney pots, with a distant glimpse of the Foundling Hospital, and a mews in the foreground. And here, with Bello crouching by her side, she wept, like a a child as she was, at her first coming to her new home.

CHAPTER XVII.

"AND why did not Mr. Earnscliffe bring you?" was Miss Georgy's first distinctly addressed question to Marguerite in the course of the evening. "I thought as he was such a great friend, he would not have let you travel alone!"

The sudden mention of his name made Marguerite colour up, and start, in a manner that caused Georgy to fix her black eyes searchingly upon her face, and draw all sorts of conclusions in a moment.

"Mr. Earnscliffe had left, he was only pay-us a visit."

"Returned to England? shall you know him in London then?"

"Oh, no!" very quickly. "I shall not see him any more, he is going to Italy, to remain abroad some years."

"I suppose so. I never thought it would be much of an acquaintance!" said Mrs. Danby, scornfully, from her throne on the sofa.

But Georgy, with sharper eyes, saw that it *had* been an intimate acquaintance; and that Marguerite winced at the name. "Tell us what Earnscliffe is like?" she went on, happy in her power of making the poor child's face blush, and her eyes fill. "I have seen him, but not near. Is he very good-looking?"

"Yes," said Marguerite in a low voice, and gazing straight into the fire, round which they were sitting, "he is considered very handsome."

"Considered—but what do you think?"

"I—I—hardly know, madame."

"Madame!" said Georgy, laughing, rudely. "It is not the fashion, in England, to call young ladies madame! How long did he stay with you?" she went on relentlessly.

"Three months altogether."

"A visit of three months!—goodness! What was there to amuse him?—had you any neighbours or parties?"

"Oh, no!" replied Marguerite, hoping to

escape from speaking of Philip; "we knew no one but the curé and the doctor, and I never went to a party in my life."

"No, one would say it from her manner," Danby ventured to remark.

"No; there are some people without any natural timidity," replied his wife; "and Miss St. John appears to be of them."

"But how did you amuse Mr. Earnscliffe?" went on Georgy, untiring in her sport.

"He never wanted to be amused; he was perfectly happy, conversing with my father, or wandering through our wild woods with me," replied Marguerite, turning her large dark eyes full upon Miss de Burgh. "Our life was delightful to him, after having had so much of society in London."

Utterly unused to what English young ladies term 'quizzing,' Marguerite had detected the bent of Georgy's inquiries; and her spirit rose at the idea of being cross-examined.

"Oh, how pastoral," returned Miss Georgy, with a sneer. "From all I have heard of Earnscliffe, he must be just the kind of man for these innocent pleasures and companionships!"

"And who has educated you, dear?" said Danby, upon whom this little by-play was lost; "for educated I am sure you are."

"My father taught me in English for two hours every day," replied Marguerite, "while he was strong enough to do anything; and monsieur le curé has taught me in French from my infancy."

"Monsieur le curé!" interrupted Mrs. Danby. "I trust, sir," addressing her husband, "that you have not introduced a papist into this house?"

"You are not—a papist—my dear?" said Danby, nervously; "surely you cannot be one!"

"Papist, sir?"

"Yes, a Roman Catholic."

"Oh, no! Much as I admire their form of worship, I have been brought up to my father's faith."

"Admire their form of worship!" exclaimed Mrs. Danby, with pious horror. "Idolatrous wretches!"

"Ma, I wish you would drop those expressions," interrupted Georgy, "they are so

wounding to the feelings of persons of Catholic spirit."

"Oh, Lord! if they have begun *that*," ejaculated Danby, his head sinking hopelessly between his hands. "Marguerite, my dear, do you know the difference between Anglicans and Evangelicals, because you soon will, if you are uninformed on the subject."

It was a singular thing, that Mrs. Danby and her daughter being both so perfectly worldly, as people in general would judge, and having led a life abroad, the reverse of devout, should now consider it incumbent upon them both to entertain very strong doctrinal opinions: for which they were ready at all times and all places, to do battle. Each had her own church, her pet parson. Mrs. Danby attended a crowded, west-end chapel, where an eloquent young extempore preacher, of sleek face, and white-handed appearance, set forth to a fashionable congregation, the hottest amount of low church doctrine that could be diluted into a discourse of an hour and a quarter; and with great self-complacency on the subject of his own election, pronounced judgment each Sunday, on the heathenish idolatry, and per-

fect certainty of perdition, of the larger majority of Christendom; and Miss Georgy frequented a certain mysterious church, where the dim light scarcely enabled young ladies to read the illuminated letters on their gilt prayer-books; and where intoning, and candles, and flowers, and chorister-boys, gave much scandal to a protestant churchwarden, and the mass of the parishioners. As may be imagined, the ladies' opinions clashed not a little, and as both were very firm, and both invited their spiritual directors very frequently, a good many passages of arms were the result.

"I never heard of either Anglican or Evangelical," said Marguerite, in answer to Danby's question. "My father was Church of England."

"Oh, that is quite old-fashioned now, my dear. However, I am old-fashioned myself, and I will take you to Westminster Abbey, for you to hear the English service, next Sunday. Of course you have never heard our Liturgy?"

"Only read by my father, but it scarcely could sound more beautiful than *that*. We used to have our service together every Sunday evening."

"Well, I am glad to hear you were brought up with English ideas, and have not got into the foreign ways of breaking Sunday," Danby observed.

"Oh! Sunday was always such a happy day in my childhood," said Marguerite, her face gladdening as she spoke. "In winter, Manon and I used to dance in the great salle; in summer, when father was well enough, we made excursions into the woods, Manon and all, and dined under the trees; then, afterwards, I would sit making wreaths of the wild-flowers we had gathered on the way, while I sang songs and ——"

"Danced!—sung songs!—made wreaths, my dear! are you speaking of *Sunday?*"

"Yes, sir, it was our féte-day—God's day—father told me—the day of happiness."

"Hum," answered Mr. Danby," shaking his head, doubtfully, while the two extremes of church-opinion exchanged looks, and met for once in this condemnation of such a flagrant case of immorality. Mrs. Danby deprecating with her hand as though to say, that the state of this young woman was, indeed, past recal.

"When you are at Rome, act like the Romans."

At Wiesbaden and Mainz, the De Burghs had flaunted, many a score of times, in gay silks and bonnets, to listen to military bands on a Sunday afternoon. But they were now in England, which made a very great difference. And they both regarded Marguerite with the fierce eyes of outraged excellence.

"But," pursued Danby, wishing to smother over everything, "I am sure you will conform to English opinion now, and not dance or sing on Sundays. It might be very well in those wild places, but ——"

"Ah, sir!" interrupted Marguerite, mournfully, "you need not tell me—I shall never wish to do either here. Those were in the happy times before my father was so ill."

"And can you speak French pretty well?" Georgy condescended to enquire.

"Oh!" replied Marguerite, in French. "It is much more familiar to me than English. I greatly prefer speaking it." And she continued talking with that perfectly French intonation and accent, to which no foreigner can ever attain.

"It is no gift!" Georgy interrupted. "Of course, when you are born and brought up in the country, it would be very strange if you could not speak the language! Can you sing, or play?"

"I have not learnt the piano yet; but I can play accompaniments to my songs on the guitar, and I have a very good voice."

"And no bad opinion of yourself I should judge," Georgy added, half aloud.

"It is fortunate Miss St. John has such confidence in her own power." Mrs. Danby remarked. "Her varied accomplishments she will probably find needful in her future walk of life. A French accent above all is desirable for a governess. Oh! how wearied I am!"

And rising with languid dignity, the mistress of the establishment rang the bell; and then commanded a hungry-looking young housemaid, with much asperity, 'to summon the servants,' i.e., Jenkins, and an unhappy attempt at a page, 'to evening readings.'

END OF VOL. II.

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